

THE
WORKS
OF
JAMES HERVEY, A. M.

LATE RECTOR OF WESTON-PAVELI,

In Northamptonshire.

Vol. 4.

CONTAINING

THE RÖN AND ASPASIO.

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a
flame that burneth. *Isai. lxi. 1.*

Minerva-Office :

PRINTED AND SOLD BY J. PLUMBE, ROTHERHAM.

Sold also, by the following Booksellers :

A. ROBINSON, MANSFIELD ; SLATER, BACON, AND CO. SHEFFIELD
J. SMITH, LEEDS ; P. G. BATTLE, HULL ; T. CROOKES,
ROTHERHAM ; J. ABEL, NORTHAMPTON ; J. COCK-
SHAW, LIVERPOOL, AND J. STAFFORD,
BUNCHAM.

1802.



LETTER X.

ASPASIO TO THERON.

DEAR THERON,

I THANK you for your letter, because it entertains and improves me. I thank you for your postscript, because it is my encouragement and my apology.—I am set down to write, with a copious stock of materials. It will be far more difficult to contract, than to enlarge. I must therefore acknowledge myself obliged to your candour, for assigning me the easier task.—That prolixity, which, in others, might be ungenteel and faulty; is, in me, an act of complaisance, and an instance of duty.

Though absent from you, I went with you in your late ramble. Your descriptive pen has made me partaker of the ideal delight: may divine grace enable me to share in the spiritual improvement!—For indeed the fields of nature, and the scenes of creation; the wise contrivance, and beneficial order of the universe; yield ample matter for religious improvement. They tell us a thousand and a thousand animated, affecting noble things, concerning the blessed **GOD**, and his glorious perfections. Yet they cannot tell us the noblest things. They cannot give us the grandest view of the divine **MAJESTY**, nor present us with the brightest display of his excellencies. Here the whole creation falters, or rather confesses its impotency. The depth saith, it is not in me; and the sea saith, it is not with me. It is not to be found on the globe of the earth, nor to be traced in the circuit of the skies. When you displayed the

beauties of the morn, breaking forth from the obscurity of night; when you adopted that fine spirited aspiration from our philosophic poet; I could not forbear adding—"thus
 " may the gracious GOD, who commandeth, the light to
 " shine out of the midnight darkness, shine into our hearts;
 " and give that incomparably glorious knowledge, the
 " knowledge of his blessed SELF! which though discerna-
 " ble though all the tracts of creation, and derivable from
 " every work of his almighty hand; yet no where beams
 " form with such complete and such amiable lustre, as in
 " the person of JESUS CHRIST*."—Here we behold
 all the sublime perfections of the DEITY, not only mani-
 fested in inimitable splendour, but operating for our own ad-
 vantage. We behold them, as Job speaks, for ourselves†, and cannot but receive inexpressible refreshment and joy from the view.

When you walked beneath the shade of those huge, horrid and enormous cliffs; both amused and alarmed at their stupendous magnitude, and frightful irregularity—When you cast your eye upon the smooth floating expanse, which spread itself with boundless and amazing magnitude below—when you surveyed the unmeasurable arches of the sky, bending to their mighty base all around, and raised to inconceivable heights above—when you meditated, in that awful solitude, on the wildest and most magnificent appearances of nature—I felt the same kind of devout astonishment with yourself. While the soul was wrapt in pensive stilness, and pleasing dread‡, methought, I heard a voice, or something like a voice, from the silent spheres, as well as from the sounding seas. It seemed to echo back, what the angel, whom John saw flying in the midst of heaven, once proclaimed, "worship HIM, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water§. Worship him, who stretched out that azure pavilion with such surpassing grandeur: who measured yonder world of waters,

* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

† Job xix. 27.

“ in the hollow of his hand; and before whom, this immense range of mountainous cliffs, is but as dust upon his scale.”

When you described the dismal situation of a wretch, exposed on the edges of the tremendous precipice; hanging over the ragged rocks, and the unfathomable gulf; and cleaving only to a slender, treacherous, breaking bough; how heartily did I join in your adoring acknowledgments to that kind, interposing, blessed hand, which rescued us from an infinitely more threatening and dreadful danger! Rescued us, as slaves, from the dominion of the devil; snatched us, as brands, from the inextinguishable burnings. And bid us (O marvelous, superabundant goodness!) bid us possess the liberty of righteousness; bid us inherit the kingdom of heaven.

When you mention the past indolence, and the present fervour of your prayers, I could not forbear reiterating my praises to GOD on your behalf. This is a proof, my dear Theron, that your feet are in the way everlasting. For it is written, “ they shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them*.” This is the work of the HOLY GHOST, moving and influencing your heart. For what saith the scripture? “ I will pour upon them the spirit of grace and of supplication†”. And our LORD himself mentions this, as the indication of a hopeful condition; behold! he prayeth‡.—Had not Saul prayed before! Yes, and made long prayers too. But he never, till that instant, was sensible of his undone and damnable condition. Never cried to GOD from the depths of his distress, or from the depths of his heart. Nor never solicited the throne of grace, in the all prevailing name of JESUS CHRIST.—His prayers, till then, were somewhat like the motes, which fluctuate in the air, without any vigorous impulse, or any certain aim. But in that hour, they were like the arrow, which springs from the strained bow; and, quick as lightning, flies to the mark.

I was pleased to find you, in the process of your letter, insensibly forgetting the narrative ; and so engaged by the subject, that you spoke not as the relater, but as the beholder. Thus may we always be affected, when we study the oracles of truth. Study them, not as cold unconcerned critics, who are only to judge of their meaning ; but as persons deeply interested in all they contain. Who are particularly addressed in every exhortation, and directed by every precept. Whose are the promises, and to whom belong the precious privileges.—When we are enabled thus to realize appropriate the contents of that invaluable book ; then we shall taste the sweetness, and feel the power of the scriptures. Then we shall know, by happy experience, that our divine MASTER's words, are not barely sounds and syllables, but they are spirit, and they are life *.

I was still more agreeable entertained, with your picture of commerce ; and your display of the advantages, which we receive from navigation. One advantage, however, I can specify, which is greater than any, greater than all, you have celebrated. An advantage, which will endear and ennoble navigation, so long as the sun and moon endure. The gospel, my friend, the gospel of our salvation, was conveyed through this channel. Without such a vehicle, how could that inestimable commodity have reached our island ; The volume that comprizes it, and the preacher that published it, both were imported, both brought to us by shipping. And may we not say, with enraptured *Isaiah* ? *how beautiful are the feet of them, that bring good tidings ; that publish peace ; that bring good tidings of good ; that publish salvation ; that say unto Zion, thy GOD reigneth †*. It is pleasant to hear their voice ; pleasant to contemplate their message ; and pleasant even to behold, the ground on which they trod, or the very waves over which they sailed.—This made the holy prophet rejoice in spirit, when he fore saw the extensive spread of his MASTER's glory, and

* John vi. 63.

† *Isa. li. 2*. Never did language help speak an enraptured soul, more significantly than this sacred exclamation. The prophet is all wonder and all joy. He is to enamoured with his subject, and so captivated with the glory of the gospel, that he can never say enough of its excellencies.

the certain commencement of our happiness. This put into his mouth that affectionate and congratulatory address; which in a particular manner, is to direct us and our countrymen: *sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the ends of the earth: ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; ye isles and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice; let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory unto the LORD; and declare his praise in the Islands*.*

We read, in Ezekiel, of the most magnificent fleet, that ever ploughed the seas. The ship-boards were of the fir-trees of Senir, and the masts of the cedars † of Lebanon. Oars were hewed from the oaks of Bashan, and benches of ivory were brought from the Isles of Chittim. The fine linen and brodered work of Egypt, floated to the wind, and formed the sails. While blue and purple from the Isles of *Elishah*, composed the rigging, and cloathed the mariners. Let us suppose, that the freight of this splendid navy, was proportioned, in dignity and value, to its sumptuous tackling. Yet how poor, how despicable were either, were both, if estimated with the treasures of the gospel: those divine treasures, which spring from the imputation of our REDEEMER's righteousness! And which have much the same kindly influence on religious practice, as navigation, with all her improvements, has upon traffic.— Give me leave to confirm this assertion, by selecting a few instances, and applying them in a few interrogatories.

One of the benefits, proceeding from the imputation of CHRIST's righteousness, is pardon. Pardon, not partial, but complete. A pardon of each sin, be it ever so *heinous*; a pardon of all sins, be they ever so *numerous*. For thus saith GOD the LORD, who sent both his prophets and apostles, preaching peace by "JESUS CHRIST. I will "pardon ALL their iniquities, whereby they have sinned,

“ and whereby they have transgressed against me *”—To learn the desirable nature of this blessing, let us step back into the annals of history, and attend a traitorous unhappy nobleman to vindictive exit. His body is demanded by the ministers of justice. Reluctant and trembling, he is conducted to the scaffold. There, the alarmed criminal sees the mourning block. Sees the glittering ax. Sees the coffin prepared for his corps. Sees thousands of spectators; waiting, with eager looks and throbbing hearts, and fearful catastrophe. In a word; he sees death advancing, with all the solemnities of *horror and woe*.—Time elapses. The preparatory ceremonies are dispatched. The fatal period is arrived. No longer respite can be allowed. He must submit to immediate execution. He prostrates himself to receive the stroke. But—seized with new terrors, at the poised ax, and approaching blow, he starts from the dangerous posture.—Again he bends, and again snatches his neck from the impending edge.—A third time, he lifts his pale countenance, to the pitying crowds, and departing light.—Once more he bows to the block, and once more raises his head, in *wishful expectation* of the royal clemency. At this critical instant; at this moment of awful suspense; had a messenger appeared, with a shout of joy upon his tongue, and a sealed pardon in his hand; O! how transporting the news! welcome, *inexpressibly welcome* the favour! What was denied to his passionate desires; denied to the importunate solicitations of his friends; is freely offered to in the gospel of *CHRIST*: a pardon of infinitely higher consequence; which obliterates millions and millions of rebellious acts: which extends its blessed effects, not merely through the little span of life, but beyond the gates of the grave—beyond the boundaries of time—through all the ages of eternity.

How unfathomable is that immense flood, on which Theron lately exercised his contemplation! The toiling plummets, with all their length of cordage, are unable to find a bottom. Were the hugest millstones, or the highest towers,

or the most spacious cities, cast into that prodigious gulf they would be totally overwhelmed, and irrecoverably lost. Therefore the inspired prophet, to shew the boundless extent of the divine mercies in JESUS CHRIST, and to denote the fulness of their pardon who are cleansed in the REDEEMER's blood, hath illustrated both by this grand similitude, "thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea*"—not one, or a few, but all their sins—not barely behind thy back, but into the sea—and not into the shallow parts, but into the very depths of the ocean—so that they shall never rise up in judgment; never be taken notice of; no, nor ever be remembered any more.

With an act of total indemnity, let us join a thorough restoration to favour—If the wrath of an earthly king be as the roaring of a lion†; how much more tremendous is his indignation, who is able to cast both body and soul into hell! If the favour of an earthly sovereign be as dew upon the grass; how much more desirable and delightful HIS loving-kindness, whom all things in heaven and earth obey!—By the righteousness of JESUS CHRIST, we are freed from all foreboding apprehensions of the former, and established in the comfortable possession of the latter.—The gospel renews and ratifies that joyful proclamation of the angelic host, peace on earth, and good-will to men‡. GOD is not only pacified towards believers, but well-pleased with them in his dear SON. Well pleased, says the prophet, for his righteousness sake. Beheld in this spotless robe, they are the objects of his complacential delight, and he rejoices over them to do them good.

Nay, they are made children, sons and daughters, of the LORD Almighty§. And if sons, then heirs; heirs of GOD, and joint heirs with CHRIST.¶—As many as received him, to justify them by his precious blood and imputed righteousness; to them gave he power, the prerogative or privilege, to become the sons of GOD**. As verily

* Mic. vii. 19.

† Prov. xiv. 18.

‡ Luke ii. 14.

§ 2 Cor. vi. 18.

¶ Rom. viii. 17.

** John i. 12.

and truly the sons of GOD, as ever they were the children of their natural parents.—The chief captain mentioned in the acts, purchased his freedom of the imperial city Rome, with a great sum of money *. If such a little transient immunity, was so valuable in his esteem; who can express the worth, who can conceive the dignity, of this divine adoption? yet it belongs to those, who receive the gospel, and are interested in CHRIST. They have access to the omnipotent BEING; such free and welcome access, as a beloved child to an indulgent father. To him they may fly for aid, in every difficulty; and from him obtain a supply, in all their wants.

GOD, as the sacred charter runs, IS THEIR GOD. All his lovely, all his adorable perfections, are their glorious inheritance, and their exceeding great reward. That eternal power, to which nothing is impossible, exerts itself as their guard; and that unerring wisdom, from which nothing is concealed, acts as their guide. His very justice is no longer an incensed adversary, demanding vengeance or meditating destruction; but a faithful gaurantee, to provide for the punctual execution of the REDEEMER's treaty, and for their complete enjoyments of its various blessings.—What a privilege is this! Rather what a cluster of privileges is here! weigh the kingdoms of the world; cast all the glories of them into the scale; and they will be found, when compared with these divine prerogatives, emptier than the bubble that bursts, lighter than the spark that expires.

In the gospel, which is the ministration of righteousness, are given exceeding great and precious promises. Of such value, that they were procured by the blood of CHRIST; of such certainty, that they are ratified by the oath † of JEHOVAH. So durable, that, though all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the grass, this word of our GOD abideth for ever ‡; so efficacious, that there are no such cordials to revive our fainting, and no such bulwarks to secure our indangered souls. With these

the bible is as richly replenished, as the clear midnight sky is bespangled with stars. They are all yea and amen, consigned over as a sure unalienable portion, to them that are in JESUS CHRIST*.

Another benefit, given in consequence of the REDEEMER's righteousness, is the sanctifying SPIRIT. A most comprehensive blessing this! Our SAVIOUR intimates, that it includes every heavenly gift, is an assemblage of all good things†.—It must, doubtless, be a singular comfort to blind Bartimeus, when his eyes were opened, and he beheld the all-cheering light of the sun‡! So, and far more comfortable, are the enlightening influences of the SPIRIT; when they shine upon us wretched creatures, who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. When they reveal an all-sufficient SAVIOUR, dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification.—Who can imagine the satisfaction and the transport of the leper, when he felt himself healed of his inveterate disease? felt the soothing sensations of ease, where sores rankled and pain raged! instead of enfeebling languors and loathsome deformity, vigour braces his limbs, and comeliness blooms in his countenance§. Equally benign and equally salubrious, is the regenerating agency of the divine SPIRIT, on our depraved, polluted, sensual minds.—How signal was the recovery, and how welcome the change! What that unhappy creature, so wildly agitated by a mischievous Dæmon, was reinstated in the peaceful possession of himself and his faculties! When, instead of unnaturally cutting his own flesh, or committing barbarous outrages on innocent travellers, he sat composed and attentive at the feet of JESUS §; Receiving heavenly instruction from his lips, and learning the meekness of wisdom from his example. So salutary and beneficial is the transforming power of the HOLY GHOST the comforter; softening the rugged, sweetening the morose, and calming the passionate temper.—It is un-

* 2 Cor. i. 20†

† Compare Matt. vii. 11. with Luke. xi. 13.

‡ Mark x. 58

§ Matt. viii. 3.

§ Mark v. 15.

doubtedly the utmost improvement and the highest happiness of our nature, to have the image of the blessed GOD re-instamped on our hearts. This is an earnest, and an anticipation also, of endless felicity. A bud which will open in heaven, and spread into immortal glory. A dawn, which will shine more and more, till the sun of righteousness arises and brightens it into everlasting day. This bud the sanctifying SPIRIT ingrafts, this dawn the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST diffuses, in the barren and benighted soul.

In a word: receive this righteousness, and you have a title to all blessings, whether they be present or future, bodily spiritual, temporal or eternal. From the necessary conveniencies of bread to eat, and raiment to put on; even to the crown of glory, and the fulness of joy. All are dependent on, all are connected with, our REDEEMER's righteousness.—You see now, Theron, that our scheme, has no tendency to impoverish your spiritual condition, or diminish your true riches: any more than those tracts of water, which surround our island, are detrimental to the wealth of its inhabitants. Detrimental! No; they are an inexhaustible source of treasure. They convey to our use the choicest accommodations, and the most elegant delights. Such as would in vain be expected, if the whole ocean was converted into the finest meads, and most fertile pastures. So—but to apply this comparison, would forestal your principal question.

“Do not these favours, though unspeakably precious in themselves, tend to the introduction or support of ungodliness?”—Quite the reverse. Have we redemption through our SATIOUR's blood, even the forgiveness of our sins? we are redeemed, not that we may sink in supineness, or launch into licentiousness, but that we may be a peculiar people, zealous of good works*.—Are we made the children of GOD? then let our light so shine before men, that others seeing our good works, may glorify our

FATHER which is in heaven *. This is the genuine consequence of such a doctrine, and the proper effect of such a benefit.—Are we vested with sacred privileges! These admonish us, these urge us, and these dispose us, to walk worthy of HIM, who hath called us to his kingdom and glory †. Shall not the citizens of heaven be animated with higher views, than the slaves of appetite, and drudges of the world?—are we constituted heirs of the promises? the grace which they ascertain, is intended to make us partakers of a divine nature ‡; and the encouragement which they administer, incites us to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, incites us to perfect holiness in the fear of GOD §.—Such high immunities are a most endearing persuasive, not to disgrace, but magnify, not to provoke, but please, their unspeakably beneficent AUTHOR.

I might farther observe, that holiness is one of the most distinguished blessings in our system. Nay, is the very central blessing, to which all the others verge; in which they all terminate.—Were we chosen from eternity? it was for this purpose, that we may be holy and unblameable in love §.—Are we called in time? it is to this intent, that we may shew forth the praises of him, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light ¶.—Are we created again in CHRIST JESUS? it is to capacitate us for acceptable service, and to furnish us unto every good work |||. “ I will put my spirit within you, saith the LORD. For “ what end? that ye may walk in my statutes, and keep “ my judgments, and do them ††. Here comes in my Theron’s favourite, sincere obedience. And GOD forbid, that we should hold the door, or shut our arms, against so acceptable a guest!—For, very far from discarding sincere obedience, we would only introduce it, under its due character, and in its proper order. Under its due character, as the fruit, not the cause of our interest in CHRIST’s righte-

* Matt. v. 16.

† 1 Theff. ii. 12.

‡ 2 Pet. i. 4.

§ 2 Cor. vii. 1.

¶ Eph. i. 4.

¶ 1 Pet. ii. 9

||| Eph. ii. 10.

†† Ezek. xxxvi. 27.

ousness. It its proper order ; as following, not preceding, the gift of justification.

These privileges, my dear friend, are salutary, as the pool of Bethesda *. They are restorative, as the waters of Siloam †. Or like that sacred stream flowing from the sanctuary ; which healed the rivers, healed the sea, and made even the desert flourish ‡.—If justification by the righteousness of CHRIST had a tendency, to subvert the foundation of holiness ; to confirm the hypocritical professor, in his neglect of moral duties ; or discourage the sincere convert from the pursuit of real virtue ; it would, doubtless, be unworthy of any acceptance, or rather worthy of universal abhorrence. But I dare appeal, not only to the nature of the doctrine, and the reason of things, but to the experience of all ; yes, of all who have tasted, that the LORD is gracious §.—“ speak, ye who are enabled to
 “ believe, that GOD is reconciled ; has received the all-
 “ satisfying atonement ; and placed his SON's righteous-
 “ ness to your account ! That he regards you as his chil-
 “ dren, and will receive you to his glory !—Have you not,
 “ under such convictions, felt your hearts exulting with
 “ conscious joy ; and every power of your souls springing
 “ forward, to glorify your heavenly FATHER—glorify
 “ him by every instance of obedience, fidelity and
 „ zeal ?”

Can such invaluable benefits have a prejudicial influence on our practice, if, to the consideration of their superlative worth, we add that unequalled price, by which they were purchased ?—HE who is high above all height, humbled himself to be made of a woman, and born in a stable ; that we might be admitted into the family of GOD, and exalted to the mansions of heaven. And will this great humiliation, which is the basis of our happiness, prompt us to look down with contempt on others, or entertain arrogant thoughts of ourselves ?

The ONLY BEGOTTEN and the supreme delight of the FATHER, was numbered with transgressors, and rank-

* John v. 4.

† John ix. 7.

‡ Ezek. xlviii. 8, 9.

§ 1 Pet. ii. 3.

ed with felons; that we might be joined to the innumerable company of angels, and associated with saints in glory everlasting. And will any one make this a precedent or a plea, for “walking in the counsel of the ungodly; for “standing in the way of sinners; or sitting in the seat of the scornful*?

All manner of evil was spoken of the faultless JESUS; his blessed name was vilified by blaspheming tongues, and his unblameable conduct blackened with the foulest aspersions; on purpose that we may be applauded, when we are judged, and each hear those transporting words, *WELL DONE THOU GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT* †! Will this embolden us to dishonor our LORD, and stain our holy profession? shall we from hence be induced to open the mouths of his enemies, and furnish them with occasion to speak reproachfully?

HE went, galled with the lashes of the scourge, and penetrated with the pungent thorns; he went, loaded with the execrable cross ‡, and making the road with his precious blood: thus the king of heaven went—to his throne? no, but to his ignominious and tormenting exit: that we may enter into the celestial Sion, with songs of triumph on our lips, and with everlasting joy on our heads. Does this invite us to go, crowned with rose-buds, to the house of riot; or go, muffled in disguise, to the midnight-revel? will it not rather incline us, to sit down at his pierced feet, and bathe them with our tears, and take delight ¶ in mourning for our crucified LORD?

Behold! he hangs on the cursed tree. There, there he hangs; rent with wounds, and racked with pain. He pours his groans, and spills his blood. He bows his head,

U D

* Plal. i. 1. ‡ Matt. xxv. 21.

† John xix. 17.

¶ The sorrow, arising from such tender and grateful views of the crucified JESUS, is that evangelical godly sorrow, which worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of, 2 Cor. vii. 10. And is there not reason—when we consider the pains he bore, the curse he bore, and the blood he shed—is there not abundant reason to say, with Thomas the afflicted hero?

his patient princely head and dies.—astonishing, transporting consideration ! He dies for you ! he dies for me !— And will this harden our hearts, will this arm our hands, to crucify him afresh by any allowed iniquity ? Does not reason suggest, and christianity dictate, and all that is ingenuous enforce, the Apostle's inference ? *If one died for all, then they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them* *.

He thought upon us, long before the foundations of the world were laid ; he remembers us, now he is exalted to the right-hand of the MAJESTY in the heavens ; and will never, never forget us, through all the revolutions of eternity. And is this a motive to forget his name ; to disregard his word ; or to imitate the shameful neutrality and indifference of *Gallio* ? Impressed with a sense of this invariable and everlasting kindness, surely, we shall declare ourselves, as those captives in Babylon, concerning their dear native city Jerusalem : “ If I forget thee, O blessed JESUS, let my right-hand forget her cunning ; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth †”.

—————Remember thee !

Ay, my dear LORD, while memory holds a feat

In this devoted breast—remember thee !

Yes, from the table of my memory

I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,

Which youth and observation copied there,

And thy remembrance all alone shall live

Within the book and volume of my brain ‡.

Is it possible, Theron, for the contemplation of such goodness, to weaken the motives, or relax the springs of obedience ? As soon as may lenient balms kill, and rankest poisons cure ? Is such a belief calculated to discourage duty, and patronize licentiousness ? Just as much, as vernal showers are fitted to cleave the earth with chinks, or sum-

* 1 Cor. v. 15, 16.

† Psal. cxxvii. 5, 6.

‡ Shakespear.

mer suns to glaze the waters with ice.—When Antony made an oration to the soldiers, on occasion of Cæsar's death ; when he shewed them their honorable master's robe ; transfix'd with so many daggers ; when he reminded them of the victories they had won, under their assassinated commander ; when he farther inform'd them, that their murdered General had remembered them in his will—had bequeath'd all his fine gardens, and beautiful walks to their use and delight ;—heavens ! how they took fire ; revenge sparkled in their eyes ; revenge flamed in their bosoms ; revenge was all their cry. They flew to the houses of their conspirators ; laid them even with the ground ; and had they met with the owners, would have tore them limb from limb.—Some such resentment against sin, will a sense of our dear REDEEMER's sufferings excite. Especially, when set home by his blessed SPIRIT, and considered in connection with those detestable iniquities, which caused them ; and with those invaluable blessings, which were procur'd by them.—Nothing, nothing is so effectual, to beget the most irreconcilable abhorrence of all ungodliness ; to make the remembrance of it, bitter as wormwood ; the temptations to it, horrible as hell.

Let me remind you of an incident, related by your favourite historian *Xenophon*.—*Cyrus* had taken captive the young Prince of *Armenia*, together with his beautiful and blooming Princess ; whom he had lately married, and of whom he was passionately fond. When both were brought to the tribunal, *Cyrus* asked the Prince ; what he would give, to be reinstated in his kingdom ? He answered, with an air of indifference ; “ that, as for his crown, and his own “ liberty, he valued them at a very low rate. But, if *Cyrus* “ would restore his beloved Princess, to her native dignity “ and hereditary possessions, he should infinitely rejoice ; “ and would pay (this he uttered with tenderness and ardour) would willingly pay his life for the purchase.”—Could such a declaration, so highly endearing, alienate the affections of the Princess, or induce her to violate her fidelity ? let her own conduct answer the query. When all the prisoners were dismissed with freedom, it is impossible to express, how much they were charmed with their roya

benefactor. Some celebrated his martial accomplishments. Some applauded his social virtues. All were prodigal of their praises, and lavish in grateful acknowledgments. And you, said the Prince, (addressing himself to his bride) what think you of Cyrus?—I did not observe him, replied the Princess.—Not observe him! upon what then was your attention fixed?—Upon that dear and generous man, who declared, “he would purchase my liberty, at the expence “ of his very life *.”—Was her heart impressed, were all her thoughts ingrossed by benevolent offers? and shall ours be less affected with the incomparably more tender and endearing love of CHRIST?—He was not only willing, but actually laid down his life for us; a life immensely precious, and of higher dignity than all heavens.—He laid down his not for amiable persons, or worthy creatures for vile earth, and miserable sinners.—Purchasing thereby for us and our children, privileges of inestimable worth, and of everlasting duration.

Will not such beneficence, so unmeritted, so unequalled, win the most reluctant, and melt the most obdurate heart? the heart, which is not wrought upon by this miracle of divine compassion, must be steel, must be adamant; quite imperetrable, and absolutely incorrigible.—“O thou “ ever blessed, thou all-gracious REDEEMER, thy love to “ us is wonderful; passing, I will not say, the love of wo- “ man †, but the power of language, and the reach of “ thought! Who can hold out against such charming at- “ tractives? who can resist such heavenly goodness?—or- “ ly let a sense of thy love be always warm, always ope- “ rative on our minds. This shall be instead of a thou- “ sand arguments to engage, instead of ten thousand mo- “ tives to quicken our obedience.”—Other motives may produce some external services, or hypocritical performances. Terrors may extort the drudgery of the hand.—Bribes may purchase the adulation of the tongue. But this conciliates the will; this proselytes the affections; this captivates the very soul; and make all its powers like the cha-

* XENOPH. Lib. III.

† 2 Sam. i. 26.

riots of Amminadab *, ready, expectant, and active in duty. Hear the holy apostle, giving an account of himself and his spiritual state. He speaks in language somewhat similar, though greatly superior, to the profession of the Armenian princess.—“So great is the glory, so rich is the grace, so superabundant are the merits of my REDEEMER, that I am determined to know nothing but CHRIST JESUS and him crucified.”—A hark the same zealous apostle; what prompted him to such indefatigable diligence, and animated him with such invincible fortitude? why did he despise death, and dread no danger; rejoice in tribulation, and welcome persecution; and welcome persecution, and welcome persecution; “the love of CHRIST.”—“He beareth me on, with much the same saving, strengthening influence, which winds and tide exalt, when they wait the vessel to its destined harbour”.

Shall we hear what another disciple, one of the most advanced proficient in divine love, says upon the subject? one who learned his knowledge, not in the school of philosophy, but on his SAVIOUR's bosom. This is the love of GOD, that we walk after his commandments. This is the natural fruit, this the certain evidence, of love to that glorious, transcendent, and adorably merciful BEING—What? not that we supinely neglect, much less that we profanely violate, his sacred precepts; but that with assiduity and delight, we make them the rule of our conduct. Charity edifieth: this divine love, far from razing the foundations, far from demolishing the structure, buildeth up the fair fabric of universal goodness.

Let me borrow an illustration from your own letter. When a pebble is cast into the smooth canal, it moves the center, and forms a circle. The first creates a second: the second breakes into a third: they continue to multiply & expand themselves, till the whole surface is covered with cir-

* Cant. vi. 12.

† 1 Cor. ii. 2.

‡ 1 Cor. xii. 10

§ 2 Cor. v. 14.

|| 2 John ver. 6.

¶ 1 Cor. viii. 2.

cular undulations. Thus, the love of an all-gracious REDEEMER *, when shed abroad in the soul by the HOLY GHOST †, will diffuse itself through every intellectual faculty, and extend to every species of duty. Till the whole heart is filled with the image, and the whole behaviour regulated by the law of the blessed GOD.—So that I am persuaded, there is a great deal of truth and solidity, as every one must acknowledge, there is a peculiar spirit and beauty, in the apostrophe of our poet :

Talk they of morals ! O thou bleeding love !
 Thou maker of new morals to mankind,
 The grand morality is love of THINE ‡.

You mentioned the loadstone, as most signally and most extensively serviceable in the sea-faring business. Such is faith, so efficacious, in practical christianity. This, perhaps, you think a scanty and defective principal. The property of turning to the polar star, and pointing out the northern part of the world, may seem equally mean and inconsiderable. But as the one is the very soul of navigation, the other is the very life of holiness.—It is somewhat like the stone, which the Babylonian monarch saw in his dream, cut from the rock without hand §. Which, though despicable to human appearance, was mighty in operation ; destroyed the superb statue ; became a great mountain, filled the whole earth. Thus will faith exert its kindly, yet triumphant energy ; to every corruption, that it may be subdued ; to every virtue, that it may be cherished.

* I cannot but think, the reasoning is much more just, and the principal much more efficacious, in Aspasio's manner of stating the affair, than in the following famous lines :

Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,
 As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake ;
 The center mov'd, a circle straight succeeds,
 Another fill, and still another breeds.
 Friend, parent, neighbour, first it will embrace,
 His country next, and next all human race ;
 Wide and more wide th' o'gillowings of the mind
 Take every creature in of every kind.

‡ Rom. v. 5.

† Night-Thoughts, No IN.

§ Dan. ii. 34.

Faith is a real persuasion, founded on GOD's word, and wrought by his SPIRIT, that the blessed JESUS has shed his blood for my sins ; has fulfilled all righteousness in my stead ; and obtained eternal redemption for me*.

When the ALMIGHTY sunk the cavities of the ocean, and replenished them with the liquid element, he provided an inexhaustible source of moisture, for the refreshment of every animal, and the nutriment of every vegetable. In like manner, where-ever he works this true faith, he plants the seed of universal holiness, and provides for the propagation of every virtue. This persuasion of the divine goodwill, pacifies conscience, and fills the soul with admiration, gratitude and joy. This discovery of our pardon and perfect reconciliation in the blessed JESUS, overcomes our natural enmity, and excites a fervent desire to please our most merciful FATHER. In short ; this experience, and these views, of the abundant grace of GOD in CHRIST, attract and assimilate the soul ; turning it into his amiable likeness †, “ as the wax is turned to the imprinted seal.”—What will be the language of such a person ?

“ Did my exalted MASTER empty himself and become
 “ poor, that his most unworthy servant might be filled
 “ with all the fulness of GOD ‡ ? and shall not I cheerful-
 “ ly deny myself the expensive pleasures of the world, that
 “ I may have somewhat to bestow on his needy children ?
 “ has the death of CHRIST, as a punishment, satisfied the
 “ most rigorous justice for my sins ? as a price, has it ran-
 “ somed me from the dreadful damnation of hell ? as a sa-
 “ crifice, has it made my peace with GOD most high ?
 “ shall I not then, by these mercies of my dying LORD,
 “ shall I not be induced to present all the members of my
 “ body, and all the faculties of my soul, as a living sacri-
 “ fice § to his honor ?—do I believe, that my SAVIOUR

* This definition of faith may possibly, at the first view, dissatisfy and alarm even some pious people ; implying, as they are inclined, too great a degree of assurance. But if they please to take it in connection, with the explanation and adjustment, delivered in the foregoing dialogue, I hope, all cause of disapprobation or surprize will vanish.

† 1 Cor iii. 18.

‡ 2 Pt. i. 19.

§ Rom. xii. 1.

“ has not only redeemed me from the curse, but establish-
 “ ed my title to all the blessings included in the promises,
 “ and all the felicity laid up in heaven? and can I neglect
 “ to seek those invaluable blessings, or forbear to aspire
 “ after this immense felicity? can I be so ungrateful as to
 “ affront, so insensible as to forget, the infinitely beneficent
 “ **AUTHOR** of both?—am I persuaded, that the
 “ **PRINCE** of peace is entered into glory as my forerun-
 “ ner *, and has prepared mansions of bliss for my final re-
 “ ception? and shall I not follow him thither, in my hopes
 “ and my affections? be as a pilgrim below, and have my
 “ conversation above?—is not this a most sweet and effec-
 “ tual method of gaining my heart? If not so, what, then all
 “ my powers, to his blessed self, and sacred service?

Such, my dear Theron, will be the effects of faith.—
 Therefore, it is not in vain, much less to be despised, the en-
 couragement of real virtue, that the scripture lays so much stress upon
 faith: so frequently urges the importance and necessity of
 faith: represents faith, as the principal work of the divine
SPIRIT, and the great instrument of salvation. Because
 it is a sure, a sovereign means of purifying the heart †, and
 never fails to work by love ‡.—Was faith, as some people
 are apt to imagine, like a candle put under a bushel, or like
 the lamps which burn in Sepulchres; it would then be an
 insignificant labour to inculcate it, and no better than an
 empty flourish of words, to celebrate it. But we are intal-
 libly assured, that faith is a vital, an operative a victorious
 principle.

CHRIST is a Store-house of all good. Whatever is ne-
 cessary to remove our guilt, whatever is expedient for re-
 newing our nature, whatever is proper to fit us for the eter-
 nal fruition of **GOD**, all this is laid up in **CHRIST**. And
 all this is received by faith, for application, use, and enjoy-
 ment.—Faith therefore is a living principle of holiness, be-
 cause it possesses **CHRIST**, and life in him.—It is likewise
 as impossible, for the sun to be in his meridian sphere, and
 not to diffuse light; as for this faith to be exercised on

* Heb. vi. 20.

† Act. xv. 9.

‡ Gal. v. 6.

CHRIST, and not to purify the conscience and sanctify the temper.

When *Zaccheus* BELIEVED, he became a new man : his bowels yearned with compassion : the rapacious publican was a friend to the needy, and a father to the poor.—When the Macedonians BELIEVED, how eminently was their spirit ennobled, and their practice improved ! Though pressed with affliction, their souls overflowed with joy ; and even in the deepest poverty, they signalized themselves by the abundance of their liberality *.—When the first converts BELIEVED, the change in their behaviour was so remarkable, the holiness of their lives so exemplary ; that they won the favour, and commanded the respect, of all the people †.—In short ; when faith take place, and **CHRIST** is applied, the wilderness buds, and the desert blossoms as a rose. The lame man leaps like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sings. Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.

That my dear Theron may be established in faith, may increase in faith, may abound in faith, is the most affectionate wish, which thought can suggest, or friendship adopt. May his faith therefore be established like the mountain-oaks ; increase like the progressive stream ; till it spreads and abounds like the all-overflowing flood ‡ !

I intended to have closed my letter, and confirmed my point, by a very memorable story. But however your patience preserve, my time fails and my hand is weary. The next post, if nothing unexpected intervenes, shall bring you the sequel. May it, when brought to my friend, be as a nail fastened in a sure place, and give the rivet of convic-

V v

* 2 Cor. viii 2. Here is, especially in the original, as fine an antithesis, perhaps, as ever was penned. Since the preceding notes are so copious, I shall deny myself the pleasure of particularizing the beauties of this clause. I leave it to the lover of sacred literature, to admire the Apostle's expression, to be charmed with the spirit of the Macedonian believers, and to derive from both, edification mixed with delight.

† Acts ii. 47.

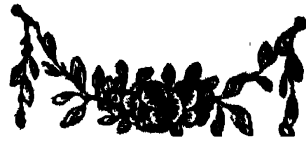
‡ Col. i. 7.

tion to all these important truths!—In the mean time, or rather at all times, remain.

Cordially and invariably Your's,

ASPASIO.





LETTER XI.

ASPASIO TO THERON.

DEAR THERON,

Faith in the righteousness * of JESUS CHRIST is a fundamental principle, in that invaluable system of sacred and divine philosophy—THE GOSPEL. By which the heavenly TEACHER is continually training up millions of rational and immortal creatures, for the true perfection of their nature; for the final fruition of their GOD; or, in other words, for a state of consummate happiness and everlasting glory.—In this school, may you and I be humble Students, and daily Proficients! while others are ambitious of glittering distinctions, and sounding titles, may it be our highest aim, to answer the character—of BELIEVERS! by this character, the supreme LORD distinguishes his chosen people, and denominates the heirs of salvation.—This character stands fairest in the book of life, and most conspicuous in the annals of eternity.—This character, however neglected or disesteemed among men, will be remembered and had in honor, when the pompous name of statesman and generalissimo are known no more.

As faith is of such singular and extensive efficacy in genuine christianity, methinks, I would have all our meditations terminate on its glorious object, and be calculated to invigorate so beneficial a principal.—And so much the rather

as too many of our ingenious writers run vastly wide of this mark.—They teach us to admire the magnitude and distances of the planets; the annual and diurnal revolutions of the globe. They call up our most pleased attention to the exact arrangement, the exquisite construction, and most curious operation, of every wheel and every implement in the machine of nature. At the same time, they more than intimate, that is the brightest mirror, wherein we may contemplate the divine perfections. This the scene of order, from whence we may derive the best rules, for harmonizing the human mind. Hence they would animate our devotion, and hence regulate our life. Not without apparent neglect, I fear with supercilious contempt, of that most illustrious discovery of the divine excellencies, which was exhibited to the children of men, by GOD manifested in the flesh. Thus they discard the gospel, and would supplant the blessed JESUS; making the universe their bible, and nature their wisdom, sanctification, their redemption.

But, blessed be GOD, we have not so learned philosophy. We can place her at the foot stool, not on the throne of her LORD; and bid her proclaim his honors, not usurp his office. Let us, therefore, when we reflect on that stupendous act, the creation of the world out of nothing; let us remember, it was HIS act, who obtained eternal redemption for sinners. When we contemplate that immense theatre of wonders, the heavens and their shining hosts; let us not forget, that they are all HIS work, who brought in everlasting righteousness for the ungodly.—Do we turn our thoughts to the ocean, that spacious and magnificent canal, which covers more than half the globe? it was formed by HIS word, and is obedient to HIS will, who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood. Do we take a view of the earth, that grand and inexhaustible magazine, which furnishes such a multiplicity of conveniences, for so many millions of creatures? it is all HIS property, and wholly at HIS disposal, who emptied * himself for our sake, and had not where to lay his head.—For thus saith the inspired philosopher; thus saith the oracle of revelation; all things were made BY him and FOR him †.

* Phil. ii. 7.

† Col. i. 16.

The great CREATOR has enriched this habitable globe with a profusion of good. He has adorned it with a variety, a regularity, and a beauty, which are perfectly charming. He has ennobled it with a dignity, a sublimity, and a grandeur, which are at once delightful and astonishing. In all this, reason cannot but discern a clear manifestation of power, a brighter display of wisdom, and a rich demonstration of benignity.—But will the CREATOR himself vouchsafe to be made flesh ; on purpose that he may bleed and die for his guilty creatures ? this is what, neither the utmost penetration of men, nor the very superior intelligence of angels, could ever have demonstrated, discovered, or conceived. This exceeds, whatever the elements have produced, whatever the sun has beheld ; as much as the extent and magnificence of the planetary system, exceeds the dimensions and the furniture of a shepherd's hut.—To reveal this, is the blessed peculiarity of the gospel. To know and believe this, is the distinguishing prerogative of a christian. To apply this, to dwell upon this, to connect this with all our observations of the universe, should be the favourite and habitual employ of the believer. This will improve wonder into devotion, and raise the entertainments of science into the joy of salvation. This will render every philosophical speculation a strengthener of our faith ; and make the various scenes of nature, a guide to grace, and a step to glory.—When this is done, then all things attain their proper end ; and as they are by CHRIST, so they are for CHRIST.

But I forget myself, my business, and my promise. I am to establish the point by incontestable fact, not to embellish it by loose harangue. With pleasure I address myself to discharge the obligation ; and exemplify, in a very memorable instance, the power of faith on religious practice.—From whence shall I fetch my exemplification ? from the memoirs of the apostle of the Gentiles ? here I find one, most concisely, and at the same most forcibly displayed.

Observe this man in his unconverted state. He breathes out threatenings and slaughter against the christians. Can any thing denote a more iniquitous and savage temper ? the roaring lion, and the ranging bear, are gentle creatures, compared with this monster in human shape.—Still the de-

scription of his barbarity heightens. I was exceedingly mad against them ; I compelled them to blaspheme ; and punished them in every synagogue. The practice, not of a man, but of a friend ! It is the very picture of an incarnate devil.—What has this infernal wretch, that may recommend him to the divine favour ? if ever there was a sinner on earth, that had sinned beyond the reach of mercy, beyond the possibility of pardon, surely it must be this Saul of Tarsus.

But the divine mercy, disdaining all limits, is overflowing and unmeasureable. Where sin has abounded like a flood, divine mercy abounds like an ocean. The favour of man is backward to interpose, till something amiable or inviting appears in the object. But the grace of GOD is immensely rich and infinitely free. It prevents the most vile and hardened rebels. It brings every requisite and commendation, in its own unspeakably beneficent nature. It accomplishes all its blessed ends, not by any towardly disposition in the sinner, but by that one glorious righteousness provided in the SAVIOUR.—This overtook the persecutor on his journey to Damascus. Light and life were poured upon him, not from any dawn of reformation in himself, but from a very different quarter. By opening, as it were, a window in heaven, while he was sojourning even in the suburbs of hell. He saw that JUST ONE.—He received the inestimable gift. He was made partaker of the salvation, which is in JESUS CHRIST.

See, now, what effect this faith has upon his conduct.—It causes a total revolution in the sentiments of his mind. It gives a new bias to every faculty of his soul. It introduces an absolute change into the whole tenour of his behaviour. As great and marvelous a change, as if you should behold some mighty torrent, turned by the shock of an earthquake ; and rolling those waters to the east, which, from the beginning of time, had flowed incessantly to the west. He adores that JESUS, whom he lately blasphemed. He preaches that faith, which he once destroyed. And he is ready to lay down his life for those believers, whom not long ago he persecuted unto death.

It may be said ; is the change as lasting, as it is surprising ? we will only consider the converted Saul, in one very

remarkable point of light.—After these things were ended says the sacred historian, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Acbaia, 'to go to Jerusalem, saying, after I have been there, I must also see Rome *.—Who can observe, and not admire, this plain unambitious manner of relating a series of labours, the most signally successful, and the most extensively useful? nothing in human conduct ever surpassed the greatness of the one, and perhaps nothing in historical composition ever equaled the simplicity of the other.

St. Paul had already reduced Ephesus and Asia to the obedience of CHRIST. He had already brought Macedonia, and Achaia into subjection to the gospel. He had long ago erected the standard, and spread the triumphs of christianity, in the regions of Arabia. Yet as if he had hitherto achieved nothing he bends his forces towards Jerusalem. Then he marks out Rome for the seat of his spiritual warfare. After this, he forms the same beneficent design upon Spain: including, in his comprehensive plan, metropolis and the boundaries † of the known world.—The universe is but just large enough, to be the scene of his activity and zeal; he never discontinues the charitable campaign, but with the last breath of his life; and he speaks of this unintermitted course of arduous and dangerous services, as if he was only going to make some friendly visit, or join a party of innocent pleasure; after I have been at Jerusalem, I must also see Rome ‡,

Which of your Alexanders, which of your Cæsars, which of all the Heroes renowned in Grecian or Roman story, can vie with the zeal and magnanimity of this poor despised tent-maker? so poor, that he was constrained to work with

* ACTS XIX. 21.

† Spain was then supposed to be the boundary of the western as the Ganges was reckoned the extremity of the eastern world.

*Omnibus in Terris quæ sunt a Cadibus usque
Anroram & Gangem.* JUV. Sat. X.

‡ I am quite charmed, I must confess, with this very simple, but incomparably gallant manner of the Apostle's speaking. Far beyond all the pomp of panegyric, it displays the hero.

his own hands, for a morsel of bread : so despised, that he was frequently treated as the offscouring of all things. Notwithstanding all these discouragements, what did he not attempt, what did he not accomplish for the honor of his MASTER, and the good of his fellow-creatures?—he embarks in a shallop ; he has neither shield nor spear ; yet he purposes to command the ocean, and conquer the globe.—what greatness of soul was here ! He expects * nothing but poverty, contempt, and death ; yet his heart is big with the hope of enriching, ennobling, and saving ages and generations. What benevolence of temper was this !—Should you enquire, concerning this illustrious champion of the cross ; who were his potent auxiliaries ? none but the divine SPIRIT.—What were his mighty weapons ? nothing but the word of truth and grace.—Whence proceeded his intrepid, his enterprising, his all-conquering resolution ? only from faith, a lively faith in JESUS CHRIST.

This, I think, is a sufficient confirmation of my doctrine. Nevertheless I have another instance to produce. One that was exhibited in an age, when the glorious object of our faith shone with dim lustre, and with distant beams. Yet it may justly be admired, and will hardly be eclipsed, by the most enlightened among the christian saints.—To keep you no longer in suspense, the case I mean, is that which Moses records and the apostle celebrates. BY FAITH, Abraham when he was tried, offered up Isaac : and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son †.—As this is so singular an example of the efficacious and triumphant operation of faith ; unequalled in any nation of the world, or under any dispensation of religion ; you will give me leave to dwell a little on some of its marvellous circumstances.

Abraham was an eminent and distinguished servant of the most high GOD. Favoured with peculiar manifestations of the divine will, and dignified with the honorable

* Acts xx. 29.

† Heb. xi. 17.

title of his MASTER's friend. Yet even this man, is harassed with a long succession of troubles; and, which was reckoned in those ages the most deplorable calamity, goes childless.

Long he waits, worshiping GOD with the most patient resignation. At length, an oracle from the LORD gives him hope, gives him assurance of a son. Joyfully he receives the promise, and rests in humble expectation of its accomplishment.—Several years run their rounds, but no pleasing infant prattles in his arms, or is dandled upon his knees. At last, the handmaid becomes pregnant. But what a disappointment was here! this is the son of the bondwomen, not of the free.

How afflicting the case of this excellent person! his kinsfolk and acquaintance see their olive branches, flourishing round about their tables. Even his ungodly neighbours have some children at their desire, and leave their residue of their substance for their babes. But Abraham, the worshiper of JEHOVAH, the favourite of heaven—this Abraham is destitute of an heir, to support his name, to propagate, his family, or to inherit the blessing. O! the straits! to which the believer is sometimes reduced; how does a sovereign providence try his faith, as it were in a furnace of fire! Not that it may be consumed, but refined, and come forth with augmented lustre; to the praise of ever-faithful, all-sufficient grace.

GOD is pleased to renew the grant to assure him more explicitly, that Sarah shall have a son. But this notice is at a very late period in life; when Sarah is advanced in years, and too old, according to the course of nature, to conceive. However, the pious Patriarch staggers not through unbelief; but hopes even against hope*.—Is it improbable? is it difficult? nay, is it to all human appearance impossible? so much the more proper, for faith to expect, and for omnipotence to accomplish.

W w

* Rom. iv. 18. 29.

At last, the gift, so earnestly desired, so vouchsafed. Sarah has a child—Son—an Isaac. One who should be a source of consolation and delight to his parents; should fill their mouth with laughter * and their tongues with joy.—With tender care, doubtless, this pleasant plant is reared. Many prayers are put up, for his long life, and great happiness. The fond parents watch over him, as over the apple of their own eye. Their life is bound up in the life of the lad †.—He grows in grace, as he grows in stature. So amiable is his temper, and so engaging his behaviour, as could not fail of endearing him to a stranger; how much more to such indulgent parents, after so long a state of barrenness, and so many expectations so frequently frustrated.

Now, methinks, we are ready to congratulate the happy sire; and flatter ourselves, that his tribulations have an end. That the storms, which ruffled the noon of life, are blown over; and the evening of his age, becoming calm and serene.—But let not him that girdeth on his harness, boast himself as he that putteth it off †. Our warfare on earth is never accomplished, till we bow our head, and give up the Ghost. The sharpest, the severest trial is still behind.

Abraham §; says GOD—Abraham knows the voice. It is the voice of condescending goodness. He had often heard it with a rapture of delight.—Instantly he replies, “Here I am. Speak, LORD; doubt to receive some fresh manifestation of the divine good-will, to himself and his family; or some new discovery of the method, in which the divine wisdom would accomplish the promises, I will multiply thy seed—I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth.—In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

* Psalm. cxxvi. 2. This is the import of the Hebrew name Isaac.

† Gen. xliv. 30.

‡ Kings xx. 11.

§ The sentence, with which the inspired historian introduces this affecting narrative, is unhappily translated in our bibles; did tempt Abraham—this expression seems, more than seems to clash with the doctrine of St. James, Chap. i. ver. 13. And cannot but sound harsh to those ears, which have been accustomed to understand by temper and tempting, persons utterly odious, and practice extremely pernicious.

Take thy son ; adds GOD. And might not Abraham reasonably expect, that, since his son was arrived to years of maturity, he should be directed, how to settle him in the world with honor and advantage ; where to find a virtuous fruitful partner of his cares, his joys, and his bed ?—He is commanded, not barely to take his son, but his only son ; his son Isaac ; whom he loved. How must these affecting images awaken all that soft complacency, and all that tender triumph, which are known only to the fond feeling apprehensions of a parent ! must not such an introduction so remarkably endearing, heighten his expectation of some signal mercy, to be conferred on the beloved youth ; and would it not render the blessing peculiarly acceptable, more than doubly welcome ?

Was he not then startled ? was he not horribly amazed ? when instead of some renewed expression of the divine favour, he received the following orders. Take now thy son—thy only son—Isaac—whom thou lovest—and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer Him there for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of *. Was ever description so affecting or, message so alarming ? Does GOD create the apple of the eye, only to be a sheath for the dagger ? Does he impart the utmost sensibility, only to inflict the most agonizing pain ? every word in this injunction, softens and endears the parent's heart ; and, at the same time, sharpens the arrow, that must pierce it through and through.

Where now, Abraham, are all thy pleasing prospects ? How often didst thou say, in thy enamoured and delighted heart ; “ this same shall comfort us concerning our trouble †. Many have been my sorrows ; but this child, “ this dear child, shall dry up my tears, and bring me to “ my grave in peace.”—Alas ! this lovely flower is to be cut down, in its fairest fullest bloom. All thy shining hopes are overcast in a moment. They are covered with darkness and the shadow of death.—But let us attend to the tragical story.

* Gen. xxii. 2.

† Gen. v. 29.

Abraham, take thy son.—Who, but Abraham, could have forbore remonstrating and pleading, on such an occasion? —*Ananias*, being charged with a commission to Saul the persecutor, takes upon him to argue the case with his Almighty SOVEREIGN. “LORD, I have heard by many concerning this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem; and here he hath authority from the chief Priests to bind all that call upon thy name.”* It can never be safe or expedient, to present myself voluntarily before him; who came hither breathing out threatenings and slaughter against me. What is this, but to court danger; and run, with open eyes, into ruin?—Thus *Ananias*. With how much greater appearance of reason, might Abraham have replied?

“LORD, have I not already left my country; left my kindred; and at thy command, left my father’s house? And wilt thou now bereave me of my child? Must I part, not with some admired folly or darling vanity, but with the most worthy object of a rational affliction? In deed with my only remaining consolation?”

“Shall I be deprived of my child, almost as soon as I have received him? Didst thou give him only to tantalize thy servant? Remember gracious GOD, the name he bears. How shall he answer its cheating import? How shall he be a source of satisfaction to his parents, or the father of many nations; if thou takest him away, in his unmarried state, and the very prime of his years?”

“If sin lies at the door, let me expiate the guilt. Let thousands of rams, let every bullock in my stalls, bleed at thy altar. My wealth, most mighty LORD, and all my goods are nothing in comparison of my Isaac. Command me to be stript of my possessions; command me to roam as a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and I will bless thy holy name. Only let my child, my dear child be spared.

“Or, if nothing will appease thy indignation but human blood, let my death be the sacrifice. Upon me be the

“vengeance. I am old and grey-headed. The best of my
“days are past, and the best of my services done. If this
“tottering wall tumbles, there will be little, or no cause
“for regret. But, if the pillar of my house, and the sup-
“port of my family—if he be snatched from me, what good
“will my life do me? O my son! my son! would GOD
“I might die for thee*.

“If it must be a blooming youth, in the flower of his
“days, be pleased, most merciful GOD, to select the victim
“from some fruitful family. There are those, who abound
“in children. Children are multiplied unto them; and
“though many were removed, yet would their table be
“full. There are those, who have flocks and herds;
“whereas, I have only this one little lamb†; the very
“solace of my soul, and the stay of my declining years.—
“And shall this be taken away, while all these are left?”

Yes, Abraham; it is thy son, and not another’s, that is
marked for the victim.—What distress, had he not been
supported by faith, what exquisite distress must have over-
whelmed this affectionate parent! How could he refrain
from crying out, and with a flood of tears?—“If the de-
“cree cannot be reversed; if it must be the fruit of my
“own body; Oh! that Ishmael, the son of the handmaid
“—How shall I speak it? My heart bleeds at the thought;
“at the thought even of his expiring agonies, and untimely
“death. But as for Isaac, the son of my beloved spouse,
“the son of my old age, the crown of all my labours—How
“shall I survive such a loss?

“*My bowels! my bowels! I am pained at my very heart.*
“If it was only to dismiss him into some foreign coun-
“try, and not to see his face for many years; even in this
“would be a sore tryal. But to lose him by the stroke of
“death; to have him cut off out of the land of the living!
“will not the blow that dispatches him be fatal to us
both?

“Yet, if he must die, and there is no remedy; may he not
“at least expire by a natural dissolution? may not some
“common distemper unloose the cords of life, and lay him

* 2 Sam. xviii. 33.

† 2 Sam. xii. 3.

“ down gently in the tomb ? may not his fond mother and
“ myself seal his closing eyes, and soften his dying pangs
“ by our tender offices ?”

No Abraham thy son must be slaughtered on the altar. He shall have no other bed of death, than the pile of hewn wood ; no other winding sheet, than his own clotted gore. The sacrificing knife, and not any common disease, shall bring him to his end.—And think not to satisfy thy sorrowing fondness by paying him the last honors of a decent interment. It is the LORD's will, that he be cut in pieces ; consumed to ashes ; and made a burnt-offering. So that nothing shall remain, to be preserved, or embalmed. It shall not be in thy power to sooth thy grief, by resorting to his grave ; and weeping at his sepulchre ; and saying—here lies Isaac.

“ But it all must be executed ; GOD forbid, that I
“ should behold the dismal tragedy. If my Isaac must be
“ bound hand & foot for the slaughter ; if he must receive
“ the steel into his bosom ; and welter in his own innocent blood ; O ! let it be far, far from the sight of these
“ eyes !”

Even this mitigation cannot be granted. Thou, Abraham, thou thyself must stand by ; must look on ; must see him slain.—Nay, thou must not only be an eye-witness of his agony, but be the executioner of thy Isaac. Yes ; thy hands must lift the deadly weapon ; thy hands must point it to the beloved breast ; thy own hands must urge its way, through the gushing veins, and the shivering flesh, till it be plunged in the throbbing heart. GOD will not permit the work to be done by another. The father must be the murderer.

Is not the wretched father stunned and thunderstruck ? does he not stand fixed in horror, and speechless with grief. What words can be mournful enough to express his sorrow ? —To murder a son ! is it not impious, execrable, shocking ? nature recoils at the very thought ! then can the best of fathers perform the deed ?

How shall he answer it to the wife of his bosom, the mother of the lovely youth ? who bore him in her womb ; who brought him forth with pain ; and nursed him up, amidst

the fondest caresses. Will she not have reason to reproach Abraham, and say in the anguish of her spirit; a bloody husband hast thou been to me*.

How can he justify it to the world? they will never be persuaded, that the GOD of goodness can delight in cruelty, or authorize so horrid an action—Will they not take up a taunting proverb, and say at every turn? “there goes the man, the monster rather, that has embrued his hands in the blood of his own son! This is he that pretends to piety, and yet could be so savage, as to assassinate, coolly and deliberately assassinate an only child!”—Might not thousands of such considerations, crowd into his thoughts, and rack his very soul?

But GOD is unchangeable. Positive is his word, and must be obeyed. Obeyed immediately too. Take now thy son. The LORD's command requireth speed. No time is to be lost, in bidding adieu to his relations, or in fruitless supplications for revoking the doom.—Prodigious trial! Was ever precept like this precept?—yet, when JEHOVAH enjoins, to deliberate, is disloyalty; to dispute, is rebellion.

This the patriarch knew. Therefore, he waits not for a second injunction.—He knew also, that obedience is no obedience, unless it be willing and chearful. Therefore he consults not with flesh and blood. He is deaf to the arguments of carnal reason, and regards not the yearning of paternal affection. But, without a murmuring word, without a moment's delay, sets forward on his journey. Not so much as betraying the least uneasiness, to alarm his wife; nor heaving the least sigh, to create suspicion in his attendants.

And canst thou, Abraham, canst thou persist in thy purpose? can thy heart firmly resolve, can thy hand steadily execute? execute this expressly severe task?—is not this child the heir of the promises, both temporal, spiritual, and eternal:—is not the great MESSIAH, whose day thou hast so passionately desired to see; whose person is the

* Exod. iv. 25.

hope of all the ends of the earth; is not that great **MESSIAH** to spring from his loins? from his loins, whom thou art about to kill?—the blessing, thou knowest, is appropriated to him. The grand entail is settled upon him—upon Isaac by name—upon Isaac alone. If he perish, all is lost. Canst thou, then, at one blow, destroy the life of thy son; sacrifice all thy earthly joys; and cut off the hopes of the whole world?—will none of these considerations discourage, dissuade, deter thee?

Most triumphant faith indeed! Deservedly art thou styled, the father of the faithful. Thy faith is stronger than all the ties of affection; stronger than all the pleas of nature; stronger than all the terrors of death—of a death, in its circumstances and in its consequences, incomparably more dreadful than thy own.

Now must he travel, during three tedious, and, one would think, most melancholy days. With his Isaac constantly before his eyes; with the tragical scene, continually presenting itself to his apprehensions; and nothing to divert his mind, from dwelling upon every afflictive incident. Thus must he travel, aged as he is, to a great distance; in suspense and uncertainty all the while. Not knowing, where the fatal business is to be transacted; whether in a private spot, or on a public stage. Only on one of the mountains which the **LORD** will tell him of.—These seems to be a combination of all things, in order to aggravate the trial; and urge him to disquietude, if not to distraction.

On the third day, Abraham lift up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. Doleful sight! The slaughter-house of his son! Does not the prospect alarm all his tender passions? no; it only awakens his circumspection. The servants are commanded to advance no farther. Here they must take their stand, and keep their distance. Lest a well-meaning, but unseasonable compassion, should prompt them to interpose.—He himself, with the fire and the knife in his hands; and his son, with the burden of wood on his shoulders, went both of them together.—Who does not pity the dear devoted youth, toiling under that load, which must soon reek with his blood, and soon reduce him to ashes?—mean

while the intended victim, wondering to see all these preparations made, and no proper animal near, asks this pertinent question ; *my father, behold the fire and the wood ! but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering ?* nothing could be more tender and moving than this speech ; which discovered such a knowledge of religion, and such a concern for its duties. Will not this rouse the father's anguish, and shake his determination ? how can he be the death of so much innocence, and so much piety ?

Faith overcomes all difficulties. Unmoved and inflexible, the patriarch replies ; GOD will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering, my son *. He hides the awful tidings from the inquisitive youth, lest they should be too heavy and afflictive for him to bear. Of his own firmness and perseverance he was sufficiently assured. But who can tell, whether *Isaac's* courage and self-denial may be equal to such a shock ? Therefore he smothers the brand in his own breast ; and forbears, as long as possible, to disclose the terrible secret. *So they went both of them together.*—The one, wondering at the strangeness of the affair, and “ not knowing that it is for his life. The other, with a “ fire pent up in his bones ; and fearing more to reveal, “ than to execute the work”.

And they came to the place, which GOD had told him of. It is a mountain. Far from the resort of men. A doleful solitude indeed ! Gloomy shades, and hoary trees ; ragged rocks, and hideous precipices ; the sound of headlong cataracts, mingled with the yell of ravenous beasts ; have made some mountains extremely formidable. But all these circumstances, wild and tremendous as they are, could never create a terror, comparable to the sadness and horror of this single thought : “ here my *Isaac* must bleed ; on this “ eminence he breathes his last”.

X x

* *Abraham* in this answer, like many of the other prophets in their predictions, seems not to have thoroughly understood the import of his own words. What he himself meant, I apprehend, is represented in the following paraphrase of his speech. Yet GOD so over ruled his tongue, that it more fully expressed the divine decree, than the parental aim.

I should not wonder to see the patriarch overwhelmed with consternation. His thoughts lost in a tumult of fear, trepidation, and perplexity. So as not to know, either where to begin ; or how to proceed ; or what to do. But *Abraham* is all composure. He dispatches the preparatory business, without the least hesitation, or the least precipitancy. As calmly, as when, "rich in cattle, in silver, and "in gold", he reared his tent between *Bethel* and *Hai*.

Abraham builds an altar there. An altar, spacious, strong and regular. Spacious, that it may receive strong, that it may sustain, the victim ; and regular, that every thing may be transacted with the utmost decorum *. Nay ; he lays the wood in order. Not huddles it together, with haste and confusion, into a rude heap ; but places each piece in the properest situation, to admit the flames, and accelerate the consumption of the sacrifice.—How must this slow process, and all these solemn formalities, afford leisure for reflection to strike deep, and employ all her stings !

Every thing is now ready for the most astonishing and dreadful act of obedience, that men or angels ever beheld. And now Abraham discloses the startling secret : "didst thou enquire concerning the lamb ? thou thyself my "dear child art the lamb provided for the burnt-offering. "—Be not amazed. Let not thy heart fail.—The GOD, "who bestowed thee on my longing desires, is pleased to "require thee again at my hand.—The LORD gave, and "the LORD taketh away, let us both adore the name of "the LORD.—Let us confide in his promised goodness, "and unanimously profess, though he slay me, yet will I "trust in him."

It does not appear that the amiable youth resisted or gainsaid. He had strength enough to oppose, and speed

* The Scriptures are generally concise in their narratives. But the relation of this story is remarkably circumstantial. The more effectually to engage our attention, and interest our affections ; as well as the more illustriously to display the numerous difficulties, and the pressing trials, which the heroic patriarch encountered---surmounted---triumphed over.

enough to escape *, the attempts of an aged father. Either or both of which, the law of self-preservation might seem to dictate, and the light of reason to justify. But Isaac knew, that his father was a prophet. In this prophetic character, he sees and acknowledges the warrant of heaven. And since his CREATOR calls, he is content to go.—Excellent Isaac! who does not admire thy courage? who is not charmed with thy resignation? and must we, in a few minutes, must we see thee pale, a bloody a breathless corpse?

Methinks I shudder, as we draw near the direful catastrophe. The father knows not how to relent, and the son offers his willing throat to the knife.—Nevertheless, that the work of destiny may be sure, and no one particular relating to a sacrifice omitted, Abraham binds Isaac his son. I have known a stubborn malefactor, quite unalarmed, when sentenced to the ignominious tree; not at all impressed with the most awful representations of eternal judgment; yet, when a person came to measure him for his coffin, the hardened wretch was hard no longer. He started; turned pale; and trembled in every joint.—Even such a circumstance makes no impression on Abraham; neither alters his purpose, nor changes his countenance. He measures his Isaac; measures those limbs, which he had so frequently embraced, and so tenderly caressed; if not for the coffin, yet for immediate slaughter.

Having bound him—surprising resolution!—bound him for the sword and for the flame, he lays him upon the altar on the wood. There, now lies Isaac; the dear the dutiful, the religious Isaac! Abraham's joy; Sarah's delight; the heir of the promises! there he lies, all meek and resigned; expecting every moment, the stroke of death to fall.—O! parents! parents! do not your bowels yearn? is not humanity itself distressed at the scene?—Say thou, who art a father, what thinkest thou of Abraham's obedience? couldst thou, to such a son, have acted such a part?

* According to Josephus, Isaac was when he submitted himself to the slaughter, about twenty-five years old. Others think, his age was thirty-three; which makes him more exactly resemble his suffering LORD. Then his father must be above a hundred and thirty years old. Either account will justify Aspasio's supposition.

See! the father, resolute to the very last, unsheaths the murdering blade; makes bare the innocent bosom; and marks the place, where life may find the speediest exit. His heart fixed! he stretches forth his hand; he lifts the sharpened steel; and determined to finish at a blow, is even now aiming—when—rejoice O ye worshippers of a gracious GOD break forth into singing, ye that are in pain for the tried parent! the LORD Almighty interposes, in this article of extreme need*. The ANGEL of the covenant speaks from heaven, and with-holds the Patriarch's hand, in the very act to strike. GOD, who only intended to manifest his faith, and make it *honorable*, bids him *do no harm to the lad*. Yea; GOD applauds his obedience; and substitutes another sacrifice in Isaac's stead; renews his covenant with the father, and not only reprieves the life of the son, but promises him a numerous and illustrious issue. Promises to make him the progenitor of the MESSIAH, and thereby a blessing to all the nations of the earth.

Tell me now, *Theron*, was there ever such an astonishing effort of obedience? such a perfect prodigy of resignation? YET THIS HATH FAITH DONE†.—If you should ask, how was it possible for Abraham to perform all this, in the manner described? the answer is obvious. Because Abraham BELIEVED; or in other words, was fully persuaded, that the arm of the LORD, which had raised this son from the barren womb, was able to raise him again even from dissected limbs or from smothering‡ ashes.—The same GOD, who required this sacrifice, had expressly declared, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. Therefore the patriarch assured himself, that the promise would, in a way known to infinite wisdom, be most punctually accomplished. Hence he

* Upon this most reasonable interpretation, the inspired historian makes a very judicious and edifying remark. Which seems to be greatly obtained, if not entirely spoiled, by our translation; in the mouth of the LORD it shall be seen.

† Heb. xi. 17.

‡ He seems to have expected not only the certain, but the immediate restoration of his flamen. That he should be revived on the very spot, before he left the place; so as to accompany his return. For he says to his servants, not I, but we will go, and worship, and return.

made no dispute, and felt no reluctance. His faith disregarded all the contrariety of appearances; banished every uneasy apprehension; and neither fear, nor sorrow, had place in his breast. Confident of GOD's ability, and making no doubt of his fidelity, he readily and chearfully * obeyed.

You admire, and very justly, this heroic act of obedience. A son, for whom he waited so long—received in so extraordinary a manner—upon whom his heart was set—in whom all his expectations centered—who alone could convey to all nations the promised blessing—to offer this son as a sacrifice, and that by his own hand—never was such an instance of obedience performed, attempted, or heard of. Yet we shall both do well to remember, that Abraham was not justified by this, but by the infinitely more noble obedience of JESUS CHRIST. His faith, receiving this, relying on this, rejoicing in this, disposed and enabled him for such wonderful self-denial, fortitude, and duty.

If all this which would otherwise have been utterly impracticable, was wrought by faith; you need not suspect, of weakness and insufficiency, so approved a principle.—Far, far from enervating, it will invigorate every good disposition! and instead of damping, will give life to every religious duty.—Cherish faith, and you will of course cultivate obedience.—Water this root, and the branches of universal godliness will assuredly partake the beneficial effects; will spread their honors, and bring forth their fruits.—Through the power of faith, the saints have wrought righteousness, in all its magnanimous and exemplary acts.—The doctrine of faith is called by St. Paul, a doctrine according to godliness †; exquisitely contrived to answer all the ends, and secure every interest of real piety.—The

* This account, is so very extraordinary, that I shall not be surpris'd, if the reader finds some difficulty in giving his assent to it. Especially, as he may have accustomed himself to form very different conceptions of this remarkable affair; and may possibly be confirm'd in a different train of ideas, by seeing a representation of the story in a celebrated print. Where the father appears, clasping his son in a tender embrace; bedewing him with his tears; and suffering as much through grief as the devoted youth is going to suffer by the knife.

† Tim. vi. 3.

grace of faith St. Jude styles, our most holy faith* ; intimating, that it is not only productive of holiness, but that the most refined and exalted holiness arises from this stock ; is produced by believing in JESUS.

Let us then be diligent to exercise, and careful to increase, faith in JESUS CHRIST. Let us maintain the same zealous solicitude for this leading capital grace, as the renowned Epaminondas expressed for his shield. When that gallant general was, in an engagement with the enemy, struck to the ground ; his soldiers carried him off, breathless and fainting to his tent. The moment he opened his eyes, and recovered the use of speech, he asked—not whether his wound was mortal ? not whether his troops were routed ?—but whether his shield was safe ?—may we be enabled, my dear friend, to keep our shield safe ! May we be strong, be steady, be lively in faith ! Then, I doubt not, we shall give glory to GOD ; receive comfort to ourselves ; and abound in the works of the LORD.

The Apostle prays, in behalf of his Ephesian converts, that they may every one enjoy the privileges of grace, and each experience the efficacy of faith. Or, to use his own animated words, that they *may know, what is the hope of their calling in CHRIST JESUS ; and what is the exceeding greatness of his power, to themward who believe* †. Than which prayer, nothing can close either this or the preceding letter, with more propriety, or with greater dignity. As nothing can more fully express the sentiments, the wishes, the very soul of

Your most affectionate

ASPASIO.

P. S. I said, “ the infinitely more noble obedience of. “ JESUS CHRIST.”—For, to this obedience I would have our thoughts continually directed. This surpasses the services both of angels and men, in all their various and won-

* Jude, 20.

† Eph. 1, 18.

derful orders. It is true, compared with our duties, Abraham's obedience is like Saul's stature who, from his shoulders and upward, was higher than of the people. But when the righteousness of CHRIST comes into view, it is somewhat like that magnificent personage, described by St. John, in the tenth of the Revelation *.—Should such a sublime and majestic being, appear amidst an assembly, of the most renowned monarchs in the world ; how would their splendour be eclipsed, and all their grandeur dwindle into meanness ! Before such an illustrious potentate of heaven who would take notice of Cæsar, or bestow a look upon Alexander ? so, the righteousness of CHRIST, being the righteousness of HIM, who lay in the bosom of the FATHER from eternity ; the righteousness of HIM, who now sits on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens ; this righteousness being in itself consummately perfect, and unspeakably ennobled by the dignity of the performer ; all other kinds, degrees, or forms of righteousness shrink, before it, into the littleness of pygmies, of mites. Could they speak, the language of each would be look not
 “ upon me for I am dim, yea I am black. But look up-
 “ on you LORD, for HIS works are marvelous and HE,
 “ is glorious in his holiness.”

* If the reader pleases, he may see this beautiful and grand piece of imagery illustrated, in Hervey's Meditations. Vol. II. p. 21. Edit. 14



LETTER XII.

ASPASIO TO THERON.

IT is very probable, while I am reading your's you are perusing mine. But how unlike is my friend, to the representation he receives ! How unlike the satisfied, unsuspecting, chearful Abraham ! Why this dejected air in your temper ? why these pensive strokes in your letter* ?— Let me anticipate your reply, and make answer to myself. This gloom, I trust, is a sign of approaching day.—Just before the morning dawn, the nocturnal darkness is blackest. And just before the appearance of the **SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**, the alarmed sinner's distress is frequently the deepest. I promise myself, the hour is at hand, which will put off your sackcloth, and gird you with gladness.

Another favourable presage is, that you take the direct and certain way, to obtain substantial comfort. The righteousness of our **LORD JESUS CHRIST**, after which you inquire, about which you are solicitous, is a never-failing source of consolation. Because it acquits from all sin ; secures from all condemnation ; and renders the believer unblameable and unreprouable in the sight of **GOD**. Therefore, says the **HOLY GHOST**, his name is as ointment poured forth† : even that divinely precious name—by

Y Y

* Theron's letter is suppressed ; because, a great part of it, or what is much to the same purpose, will occur in the following dialogues. Where he opens his conscience, and discloses his scruples, tears and distresses.

† Cant. i. 3.

which he has been celebrated in the preceding epistles; by which he is distinguished in the scriptures of truth; by which, I hope, he will be more and more revealed in my Theron's mind—**THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.** The discovery of him under this most amiable and glorious capacity, will indeed be like breaking upon a vial of the richest unguents. Which not only fill the room, and regale the sense, with their delightful fragrance; but refresh the spirits, and rejoice the very heart.—Might my writing, or my discourse, be as the alabaster-box to contain, to convey, and present these reviving odours; how highly should I think my self honored, and how signally my endeavours blessed!

You ask, "how this righteousness of the divine **REDEEMER** becomes ours?"—it is a question, which I receive with the utmost pleasure; and, with equal pleasure, shall attempt an answer. Or rather, as the **SPIRIT** of our **GOD** prompted the first, may the same unerring **GUIDE** suggest the last!—This he has abundantly done by his prophets and apostles. So that I need only have recourse to their writings, and collect some of the hints, which lie treasured up in those store-houses of wisdom.

There we are often told of union with **CHRIST**. Believers are said to be *in CHRIST**, and to be one with **CHRIST**†.—What is still higher, and implies a greater degree of nearness. They are *members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*‡.—And, which denotes the most intimate connection imaginable, they that are joined to the **LORD JESUS**, are one spirit|| with him!—As these expressions appear dark, and their sense lies deep, it has pleased our all-condescending **INSTRUCTOR** to illustrate them, by a variety of significant types, and lively similitudes. This remark very opportunely reminds me of an engagement, which, some time ago, I undertook to execute, but have hitherto omitted—to make it evident, that

* Col. i. 2.

† Heb. ii. 11.

‡ Eph. v. 30.

|| 1 Cor. vi. 17.

the blessed doctrine, for which we have been pleading, is deducible from several scripture images *. A short descant upon some of the principal, will, I hope, at once discharge my former obligation, and satisfy your present inquiry.

This was shadowed forth by the costly, odoriferous, flowing unguent, poured upon Aaron's head; which ran down upon his beard, and descended to the skirts † of his clothing. So the merits of our great HIGH-PRIEST are derived down to all the faithful; even those of the meanest station in life, and the lowest attainments in religion.

Was it not typified by that instructive vision, which the Prophet "Zechariah saw? I have looked, and behold! A candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which were upon the top thereof: and two Olive-trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof; which, through two golden pipes, empty the golden oil out of themselves ‡". The bowl and the lamps were a proper emblem of believers: who are, by nature, dry vessels, and destitute of all good; yet should shine as lights, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.—The Olive-trees, arrayed in verdure, and abounding with sap; always emptying themselves, yet ever full, are a very just representation of CHRIST, of his unchangeable love, and his inexhaustible gifts.—The golden pipes, through which the olive-branches transmit their oil, seem to be figurative of faith in its various and repeated actings. By these channels of conveyance, the unspeakable benefits of a REDEEMER are communicated to our souls, and replenish those empty basins.

Another type the apostle mentions. The first Adam, he says, was a figure of him that was to come §. So eminent a figure and corresponding in so many instances, that he styles

* See Vol. II. p. 353.

† Psal. cxxxiii. 2.

‡ Zech. iv. 2. §. 12.

§ Rom. v. 14.

our *LORD JESUS the last Adam* *. And why ? because, like the first, he was a covenant-head to his people, and transacted in their stead. Were we made sinners in Adam ? we are made righteous in CHRIST. Is Adam's sin imputed to all his natural offspring ? so is CHRIST's righteousness to all his spiritual seed.—The consequence of both, render the doctrine more intelligible, and the truth the more undeniable. All men are judged, condemned, dead † ; doomed inevitably to the death of the body, and justly liable to the death of the soul, on the score of Adam's transgression. All believers are acquitted, justified, saved ‡ ; saved from the first death, and made heirs of the resurrection ; saved from the second death, and intitled to life eternal ; by virtue of CHRIST's obedience.

This union with CHRIST, was not only prefigured by types, but displayed by a variety of similitudes, taken from the most familiar occurrences of life. By which it appears to be our divine MASTER's will that we should live under the habitual belief of this momentous truth, and in the constant enjoyment of this distinguished privilege.—You cannot visit a friend, or view your children ; you cannot enter your garden, discourse with your spouse, or contemplate your own body, without a representation and a remembrance of this precious blessing.

CHRIST says to his disciples, henceforth I call you not servants, but friends §. Friends are second self §. St. Paul speaking of Onesimus, uses this remarkable phrase, receive him as myself, and, which is still more emphatical, receive him, that is mine own bowels ¶. Is not CHRIST's friendship of the most tender and exalted kind ? doubtless it must be superior to Jonathan's.—Jonathan loved David as his own soul. But CHRIST loved sinners with a love stronger than death. They were dearer to him than his own inestimable life.—Jonathan exposed himself to imminent danger in vindicating David's conduct. JESUS surrender-

* 1 Cor. xvi. 45. † Rom. vi. 15 16

‡ Rom. v. 19, 21

§ John xv. 15.

¶ Horace calls *Virgil, anime dimidium meæ*.

¶ Philem. 12, 17.

ed himself to certain death, in making reconciliation for our offences.—Jonathan interceded once and again with his father in David's behalf. CHRIST ever liveth, to plead his blood, and make intercession for transgressors.—Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garment, even to his sword, and his bow, and his girdle*. Our REDEEMER, without stripping himself, has clothed us (such is the prerogative of a divine person!) with the robe of his righteousness, and with the garment of his salvation. He has consigned over to us all the merit of his holy life and propitiatory death.

CHRIST stands related to his people, not as a friend only, but as a parent. He is called by a prophet, THE EVER-LASTING FATHER †; and we are said by an Apostle, to be his children ‡. Children look upon themselves, as interested in the wealth of their parents. They expect, and not without reasonable ground, to reap benefit from it, while the parents live; and to become possessors of it, when they die. Accordingly the father says in the gospel, son, all that I have is thine §.—Since the high and holy IMMANUEL vouchsafes to be our FATHER, can we suppose him less generous than an earthly parent? or can we imagine that his children shall have less to hope, than the heirs of an earthly progenitor? may we not, ought we not to regard all his communicable goods, all the benefits resulting from his meritorious sufferings and perfect obedience, as our portion?—especially, since he is the testator ¶ also; has bequeathed them to us by will; and, having submitted to death, become legally ours.

I am the VINE, says our LORD, ye are the branches ¶. They who believe, are ingrafted into CHRIST. Take notice of a cyon. What are the consequences of its ingrafture? it is embodied with the substance of the tree, and partakes of its fatness. The sap, imbibed by the root, circulates

* 1 Sam. xviii 4.

† Isaiah vi. 9.

‡ Heb. ii. 13.

§ Luke xv. 31.

¶ Heb. ix. 17.

¶ John xv. 5.

into it ; gives it vegetable life ; fills it with buds, decks it with blossoms, and load it with fruit. If then we are one with CHRIST, as much as the branch is one with the stock, it must follow, even upon the principles of common experience, that his wisdom is ours, to enlighten us ; his righteousness is ours, to justify us ; his spirit is ours to sanctify us ; his redemption is ours, to make us completely and eternally happy.

CHRIST is united to his people by a tie, closer and dearer than the parental. They are not only his children, but his spouse. He is often called their Bridegroom, and is not ashamed to avow the tender engagement ; “ I will betroth thee to ME for ever. Yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness* ”. The condescending GOD multiplies, diversifies, accumulates his words. And this, with admirable propriety, as well as surpassing goodness. — The honor is so high, and the favour so great, we should hardly know how to believe it, and hardly venture to apply it lest therefore by a single expression, it should not be sufficiently established, it stands ratified by repeated asseveration, and with all the energy of language. So that, be the grace ever so astonishing, we are assured, the fact is equally certain ! He that is our MAKER, is also our HUSBAND †.

Let us consider what follows, upon such an union. We may take for an example, the case of Boaz and Ruth. — Soon as their nuptials were solemnized, she that was poor became rich : from a gleaner in the field, she commenced Mistress of the harvest : and, from abiding by the maidens, had a seat at the master’s table. — If we are united to CHRIST by a marriage contract, the same effects take place. We that were poor, are rich in him. We who had nothing, possess all things in CHRIST. We that dwell in dust, are made to sit together with our exalted HUSBAND in heavenly places ‡.

* Heb. ii. 19. 23.

† Isa. liv. 5.

‡ Eph. ii. 6.

If you choose some modern exemplification, what can be more pertinent, than the remarkable instance of your neighbour Arietta? she was lately left a widow, by the dissolute and extravagant Bellario. Her circumstances miserably embarrassed, and the estate deeply mortgaged. Her friends looked shy, and her creditors became clamorous.—Scarce a day passed, but it made some new discovery of debts contracted by the deceased. So that the affairs of the survivor appeared with a more melancholy aspect, and in a less retrievable condition. But, having won, first the compassion, then the affection, of the wealthy and illustrious Philander; how happily is the face of things altered! All her debts devolve upon him, and all his dignity is derived to her*. He stands responsible for whatever she owes; and she is a sharer, in whatever he possesses.—Though ruined by her late husband, she is more than restored by her present; has reason to rejoice in his affluence, and to glory in his honors.—Have not we also reason to rejoice in our heavenly BRIDEGROOM? since a far more glorious exchange subsists between him and his mystical spouse. He has bore the curse, that we may inherit blessing. Sin was charged on him, that righteousness might be imputed to us. In a word, he has sustained our deplorable miseries, that he might impart to us his unsearchable treasures.—Does the law demand perfect purity of nature, and perfect obedience of life? it must go to him for satisfaction. Do we want grace, and glory, and every good thing? we may look to him for a supply. To HIM, *Theron, in whom it has pleased the FATHER, that all fulness should dwell*†.

It any thing can express an union, more intimate and inseparable than the conjugal, it is that of the members with the head. This image is used by the HOLY GHOST, to shadow forth the connection between CHRIST and the faithful. He is the head over all things, with respect to

* Compare Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. with Isai. xlix. 3. and Jer. xxxiii. 15, 16.

† Col. i. 19.

rule and supremacy ; but a head of life, and influence with respect to the church ¶.—The head and the members constitute one natural body ; CHRIST and his church compose one mystical body. What kindness is done, what injury is offered to the members, the head regards them as done to itself. Accordingly CHRIST says to the outrageous Saul, who made havock of the church ; Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ME † ? he declares concerning those indigent christians to whose necessities we administer relief ; inasmuch as ye have done it unto them, ye have done it unto ME ‡.—The animal spirits formed in the head, are formed for the benefit of the whole body, and designed for the use of all the members. So the righteousness wrought by JESUS CHRIST, is wrought out for his whole mystical body, and intended for the advantage of all his people ; to be the constituent cause of their justification, and the meritorious cause of their salvation.

Being then so nearly related, so closely united to the blessed JESUS, it is no wonder, that believers are now loved with the same fatherly love, and will hereafter be partakers of the same heavenly glory ¶—what might we not expect from the ever faithful REDEEMER, if he vouchsafed to acknowledge but one of these endearing names ? since he has engaged himself to us by all the ties, of affinity and affection ; may we not promise ourselves and with the assurance of hope, every good thing ; even all the fulness of GOD § our Saviour. Does not each of these tender relations, subsisting between CHRIST and his saints, imply an entire property in one another, and a mutual participation of all that belongs to either ? If this is included in each separately, how much more in all conjointly ? my beloved is mine, and I am his. I dare not say, this is the poesy of the mystical ring. Lest the thought should appear quaint, and below the dignity of the subject. But this expresses the effect, the undoubted effect of so enriching, so ennobling, so divine an union.

¶ Eph. i. 22.

† Acts ix. 4.

‡ Matt. xxv. 46.

§ John xvii. 22, 23.

¶ Eph. iii. 19.

How pleasing, yet how amazing the thought! Shall we, who say to corruption, thou art my father; and to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister*: shall we be permitted to say, concerning the **HEAD** of all principality and power, we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones†?—what a mercy might we esteem it, not to be confounded before a **MAJESTY** so sublime and magnificent! what a favour to obtain the least propitious regard from the **KING** immortal and invisible! what an honor, to be admitted into his family, and numbered among the meanest of his servants!—But to be his adopted children; to be his espoused bride; to be the members of his sacred body.—To have **HIM** for our everlasting father, **HIM** for the bridegroom of our souls, **HIM** for our heavenly head; who is the **MAKER** of all worlds, and the **SOVEREIGN** of all creatures! What words can duly celebrate, what heart can sufficiently admire, the condescension and the love of our adorable **JESUS**? or who can justly question the fruits of such a fellowship, and the consequence of such an union? question them! No, the fruits are infallibly sure, as the privilege is inexpressibly great.

Let me once again introduce *Dr. Lightfoot*, as a great and venerable witness of both these truths. Laban spake “high, when he said; these children are mine, and all these things thou seest are mine. But how high and glorious is that, which may be said of a justified person! All thou hearest of **CHRIST** is thine; his life is thine, his death is thine, his obedience, merit, Spirit, all thine‡.”—To this let me join another witness, whose testimony, though more plain, is no less weighty. Faith says Luther, “must be purely taught: namely, that thou art so entirely and nearly joined to **CHRIST**, that he and thou art made as it were one person: so that thou mayest boldly say, I am now one with **CHRIST**; that is to say,

Z z

* Job. xvii. 14.

† Eph. v. 30.

‡ See *Dr. Lightfoot's Work*, Vol. II. p. 1077.

“CHRIST’s righteousness, victory, and life are mine.
 “And again, CHRIST may say, I am that sinner, that is,
 “his sins and his death are mine, because he is united and
 “joined unto me and I unto him *.”—Rich and important words ! than which nothing can give us a juster or fuller explanation as the Apostle’s assertion, we are partakers of CHRIST †.

When some foreign ladies, of the first quality, paid a visit to Leonidas’s Queen ; the talk turned upon their rich clothes, their costly jewels, and splendid equipage. After they had severally displayed their own grandeur, they inquired after her Majesty’s finery. What she had to distinguish her from the vulgar ?—she replied, my illustrious husband ‡.—What else ? my illustrious husband.—And as often as they repeated the same question, she returned the same answer.—Could this queen speak of her royal consort, in such admiring, rejoicing, self-gratulating terms ? and shall not vile sinners look upon their REDEEMER—that most majestic, yet all-condescending bridegroom ; who is full of grace and truth, full of merit and righteousness—shall not they much more look upon HIM, as their honor and their joy ; the object of their dependence, and the cause of their boasting ?

You once mentioned self-importance. I hope, we have now renounced that specious absurdity. Have abjured that idol of jealousy. It is as much a delusion, as it is a provocation. Nothing can give us any importance, but the work and worthiness of CHRIST.—Without these, we are despicable and abominable. Our performances are vanity ; our persons are pollution ; and both deserve to be treated, like that infamous king of Israel, to whom the prophet Elisha declared ; as the LORD GOD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat King of Judah, I would not look to-

* LUTHER upon Galat.

† Heb. iii. 14.

‡ The amiable and heroic Panthea expresses herself in much the same manner, concerning her glorious husband Abiadates XERXES. Cyropæd. Lib. VI.

ward thee, nor see thee *.—But the work and worthiness, of **CHRIST**, give us acceptance with **GOD**, and dignity before his angels. These will afford us consolation on earth, and procure for us estimation in heaven. Through these, we may lift up our heads with courage, at the Judgment-seat ; and may make our appearance with honor, amidst the inhabitants of glory.—Let us then exult, let us triumph, in our heavenly bridegroom. Forsaking all other causes of confidence, let us keep our hearts, our affections our thoughts, only to **HIM**.

I should find it difficult, to refrain from the farther prosecution of so engaging a topic, did I not purpose to wait upon my Theron very speedily. Then I shall have an opportunity of pouring into his bosom all the fulness of my heart, with regard to this delightful subject—in the mean time, let me exhort my dear friend, to be of good comfort. Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning †. This sorrow of which you complain, may be the fore-runner of spiritual and eternal consolation.

While I am writing, there appears full in my view, one of the finest rainbows, I ever beheld. It compasseth the heaven with a glorious circle ; so glorious, that it is no disparagement of the Almighty **CREATOR**, to say, the hands of the **MOST HIGH** have bended it ‡.—On what foundation, would I ask, is that stately and beautiful arch raised ? from what source, do all its radiant and lovely colours spring ? it is raised on a gloomy assemblage of vapours ; and all its rich tinctures spring from a louring cloud.—Thus does the blessed **GOD**, on a conviction of guilt and a sense of ruin, spread faith, imprint holiness, and diffuse gladness. May all these, ere long, arise in my Theron's breast ! And each be—bright, as that resplendent bow—lasting, as the sun that creates it !

Yes ; it is the ardent wish of my soul, and shall be my frequent prayer to **GOD**, “ that both our hearts may be “ comforted, being knit together in love, unto all riches of

* 2 Kings iii, 14.

† Psal. xxx. 5.

Ecclesi. xlii. 12.

the full assurance of understanding †", in this great mystery of godliness.—What vigour of expression, what exuberance of ideas, and, above all, what distinguished privileges are here!—Assurance—full assurance—riches of the full assurance—all riches of the full assurance of understanding—in reference to our union with CHRIST, and its unutterably precious effects!—Can the orator express more? can the sinner desire more? can the saint, I had almost said, can the Archangel enjoy more?—may this be the portion of my dear Theron, and of

His ever faithful

ASPASIO.

† Col. ii. 2.





DIALOGUE XV.



ASPASIO had taken leave of his friend Camillus, and was come to revisit Theron. Whose thoughts seemed to be in a state of much fluctuation, and no small anxiety. Hoping, that some proper conversation on the grace and privileges of the gospel, might compose and comfort his mind. Might, while his heart was softened by humbling convictions, fix the stamp of genuine christianity; and deliver his whole soul into the mould of * evangelical religion.

When sorrow wounds the breast, as ploughs the glebe,
And hearts obdurate feel her softening shower,
Her seed celestial then glad wisdom sows
Her golden harvests triumph in the soil †.

He arrived pretty late in the evening: and, being somewhat weary with the journey, soon withdrew to his repose. The next morning, as Theron walked abroad, to taste the cool delights of the dawn; he was agreeably surprised, by meeting Aspasio.

* Deliver into the mould---Rom. vi. 17.---Which as it contains a beautiful allusion, conveys also a very instructive admonition, intimating, that our minds, all pliant and ductile, should be conformed to the precepts of the gospel, as liquid metals take the figure of some elegant mould, into which they are cast.

† Night-Thoughts

Ther. So soon awake, my worthy friend and after so much fatigue on the preceeding day!—I had not the least expectation of your company, till breakfast. Then indeed I promised myself a double regale—the refreshments exhibited on the table; and those wholesome words of our LORD JESUS CHRIST *, which, more precious than manna, drop—

Asp. How Theron!—Have you also learnt those soothing arts, which polish the speech, to deprave our sentiments? could I have suspected the enchanting wiles of flattery, from my sincere, my tried, my bosom friend?

Ther. Your friend is still sincere, and his words are very remote from flattery.—How welcome to the wind-bound mariner, weary with expectation, and sick with disappointments, is the visit of a propitious gale! How welcome to the fields, parched with drought, and gasping for moisture, are copious showers of rain! How acceptable to the Israelites, traveling through the inhospitable desert, and pining for want of the fruits of the earth, was the miraculous supply of heavenly bread!—Yet, neither propitious gales to the wind-bound mariner, nor copious showers to the thirsty soil, nor heavenly bread to the famished Israelites, could be more welcome to each respectively, or to all jointly, than your late conversation, and later correspondence, to my anxious soul.

Asp. Why, I thought, you looked upon my notions as chimerical! Is Theron also become credulous? like one of us weak-headed believers?—has he quitted the strong-holds of reason? is he vanquished by the sling-stone of faith? or can he submit to this strange method of salvation, by embracing the righteousness, and relying on the obedience of another?

Ther. I find, my reason was a feeble guide; or I myself not faithful to its genuine dictates. I was blinded with prejudice. I was intoxicated with pride. A vain conceit of my moral powers, betrayed me, as I fear it has betrayed many, into a contempt of the evangelical righteousness.—I

* 1 Tim. vi 3.

held, what I thought an honor to human nature. I now attract my opinion.—I now perceive, that as my natural light could not discover the way, neither can my personal obedience put me in possession, of life and salvation. No more banter, Aspasio :—Have done :—I am serious, and very much in earnest. So much in earnest, that if all my acquaintance of the pharisaical turn, or if all my brothers of the smile, should rally me on the subject ; I would frankly acknowledge my error, and as freely sign my recantation.

Asp. My dear Theron, I applaud your resolution. You have no more cause to be ashamed of such a practice, than Philip had to be ashamed of the imperfection in his limbs. When, being observed to go lame, with a wound received in battle, he had this consolation suggested by one of his courtiers : “ never blush, my royal Sir, for a defect, which “ puts you in mind of your valour, every step you take.”—To sacrifice our prejudices in the search of truth, is no less honorable, than to be marked with a scar, in the defence of our country. And never surely was any prejudice greater than that, which pretends, by personal virtue and morality, to supersede the necessity of imputed righteousness.

I beg pardon for my pleasantry. Since you are so very serious, a gay air was quite unseasonable.—You cannot often complain, that I am guilty of this fault. Nor can you easily imagine, the satisfaction I shall enjoy ; if, either my letters, or my discourse, have administered any advantage to my friend. I shall note it down, among the distinguished blessings of my life ; and have an additional obligation, to love the beneficent AUTHOR of all good.

But, as I cannot be a furtherer of your happiness, without the greatest delight ; so I cannot be a witness of your solicitude, without a painful regret. You must therefore permit me to ask the cause of that unusual vehemence, which I observe in your speech ; and that deep concern, which I read in your countenance.

Ther. I have been considering very attentively, what is the present state, and what is likely to be with the final condition of my soul.

My hopes and fears
Start up alarmed ; and over life's narrow verge
Look down—on what ? a fathomless abyss,
A vast eternity !

My sins, at the same time, like an armed host, are set in dreadful array, and surround me on every side.—Justice, like an injured and incensed foe, unsheaths the sword, and makes a loud demand for vengeance.—No righteousness of my own presents itself, no righteousness from the law, to which I may fly for refuge.—The method of salvation, in which I formerly confided, is a bridge broken down ; and leaves me, without affording any possibility of escape, abandoned to the approaching enemy.

To a person in such deplorable circumstances, how reviving, how delightful, is the very thought of being interested in the great REDEEMER's righteousness !—I do not wonder now at a saying of Luther's ; which I have sometimes exploded, as strangely extravagant : “ that, upon the “ discovery of this glorious righteousness, the gates of pa- “ radise seemed to fly open before him, and the dawn of heaven was all in view”.

Talking in this manner, they came to an elevated terrace. Which, about an hour before, had been shaved by the scythe, and emitted all the freshness of new-mown herbage. On one side, a fine champaign country stretched its wide dimensions.—On the other, a flower-garden exhibited the last ornaments of the year.—Here you might still see the tufted vermillion, and the full-blown ivory, glittering through spangles of liquid crystal.—There, you might trace the footsteps of the early cattle, by many a recent print on the dewy lawn.—On the walls and espaliers, autumn had spread her stores ; and was begining to beautify their rinds with many a ruddy streak, or to breath over their glossy skins her delicate and inimitable bloom.

Asp. See, said Aspasio, the wisdom and benignity, which, in amiable and inseparable conjunction, display themselves through the whole œconomy of the universe !

GOD has made every thing beautiful in his time * ; every thing serviceable in its place. A little while ago, the flowery meads delighted our eyes, and the melodious birds charmed our ears. Now, the tasteful fruits are preparing their dainties ; and presenting us with a collation, to regale our palate.—The whole earth, and all the seasons, are rich with our **CREATOR**'s goodness. Yea, the whole earth, and all that replenishes it, all that surrounds it, are full of his presence. **HE** it is, who

Warms in the Sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glowes in the Stars, and blossoms in the trees ;
Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unimpent †.

An habitual belief of this truth, gives nature her loveliest aspect, and lends her the most consummate power to please. The breath of violets, and the blush of roses ; the murmur of the woods, and the meanders of the stream : the smiling hill, the extended plain, and all the decorations of the landscape ; then appear in their highest attractives ; then touch the soul with the most refined satisfaction ; when **GOD** is heard—and **GOD** enjoyed in all.

—Is Theron lost in thought, and deprived of speech ? is he alone silent, while all things speak their **MAKER**'s praise ?—Does faith in the righteousness of **CHRIST** throw a shade over the works of creation ? Does it not heighten their beauties, and enliven their graces ?—It does ; and to such a degree, that the religious is the only true Philosopher ; nor can the pleasures of imagination ever acquire their proper relish, till they are ripened by the exercise of devotion.—With this view then, since my friend forbears let me attempt to speak : not to increase his knowledge, but to beget faith, and cultivate devotion in us both.

A A

* Eccles. iii. 11.

† Pope's Eth. Epist.

The spacious Canopy * over our heads, is painted with blue ; and the ample carpet under our feet, is tinged with green. These colours, by their soft and chearing qualities yield a perpetual refreshment to the eye †. Whereas, had the face of nature glistened with white, or glowed with scarlet ; such ardent and dazzling hues would, instead of exhilarating, have fatigued the sight.—Besides ; as the several brighter colours are interspersed, and form the pictures in this magnificent piece ; the green and blue constitute an admirable ground, which shews them all to the utmost advantage ‡. To render this fine ground still more agreeable, it is diversified, the green especially, by a multitude of intermediate kinds. From the deepest verdure, which borders upon black, even to the palest, which makes a near approach to grey.

Had the *air* been more humid and considerably *thicker*, it would have dimmed the rays of the sun, and darkened the cheerful day. The lungs of all terrestrial animals, had been clogged in their vital functions. Men had been suffocated, without the strangling noose ; or drowned, without the over-whelming flood.—Was it several degrees more *thin* and subtilized, birds would not be able to wing their way through the firmament ; nor could the clouds be sustained, in so attenuating an atmosphere. It would want that balmy softness, which continually feeds the lamp of life. It would even elude the organs of respiration ; and

* Vulg. * Alpaine calls the canopy. *Umbra* is the word by which we translate as a curtain, but the exact signification is, *Shade* or *cover*, *velamentum* *quidam* like some finely attenuated substance. Not like the curtains or the covering of the Tabernacle, which were goat hair and badgers hair. *Umbra* is a good word. But like some very fine membrane, smooth and elegant, much polished and imitatively devised. Than which comparison nothing can more perfectly correspond with the aspect of the sky. *Isai. xl. 22.*

+ ————— Gay Green,
Thou finishing nature's universal robe !
United light and shade ! Where the light dwells,
With growing strength, and ever-new delight.

Thompson's *Springs*

‡ If the reader has patience to go through the following essay, he will find it, in the end, not altogether foreign to the main subject.

we should gasp for breath, with as much difficulty, with as little success, as fishes haled from their native element.

The ground also is wrought into the most proper temperature. Was it of a firmer consistence, it would be impenetrable to the plough, and unmanageable by the spade.—Was it of a laxer composition, it would be incapable of supporting its own furniture. The light mold would be swept away by whirling winds; or the oozy glebe soaked into sloughs by the descending rains.—Because, every situation suits not every plant; but that which is a nurse to one, often proves a Step-mother to others; therefore, the qualities of the earth are so abundantly diversified, as properly to accommodate every species of vegetation. We have a variety of intermediate soils, from the loose disjointed sand, to the stiff cohesive clay: from the rough projections of the craggy cliff, to the softly swelling bed of the smooth parterre.

The sea carries equal evidence of a most wise and gracious ordination. Was it larger, we should want land for the purposes of pasturage, and the operations of husbandry. We should be destitute of sufficient room for mines and forests; our subteranean warehouses, and our aerial timber-yards.—Was it smaller, it would not be capable of recruiting the sky, with a proper quantity of vaporous exhalations; nor of supplying the earth with the necessary quota, of fructifying showers.

Do we not discern very apparent strokes of skill, and the most pregnant proofs of goodness, in each individual object in the various tenants of the globe, and the several appendances of this great dwelling?—It is needless to expatiate upon the more eminent and conspicuous beauties; all that shines in the heavens, and all that smiles on the earth. These speak to every ear, these shew to every eye, the adorable munificence of their MAKER.—It is needless to launch into the praises of the valleys, delicately clothed with herbage; or of the fields, richly replenished with corn. Even the ragged rocks, which frown over the flood; the caverned quarries, which yawn amidst the land; together with the mountains, those shapeless and enormous protuberances, which seem to load the ground, and incumber the skies;

even this contribute their share, to increase the general usefulness. They variegate the prospect ; raise an agreeable horror in the beholder ; and inspire his breast with a religious awe. They add new charms to the wide level of our plains , and shelter, like a screen, the warm lap of our vales.

We are delighted with the solemn gloom, and magnificent aspect to the forest. One, who saw the cedars of Lebanon, was transported with admiration, at their ample trunks, and towering heads : their diffusive spread, and verdant grandeur. Compared with which, the stately elm is but a reed ; and the branching oak a mere shrub *.—Was our sight qualified for the search, we should discover a symmetry and a dignity, altogether as perfect, and far more wonderful, in those groves of moss †, which adhere to the rude stone. We should contemplate, with greater surprise, if not with greater rapture, those diminutive plantations ; which strike their hasty roots in the mouldy confection, or wave their curious umbrage over the perished pickle ‡.

Who is not charmed with the vine, and its generous warming juices ? with the melon, and its delicious cooling pulp ? yet, were all our trees to produce fruits of such exalted qualities, or of such an agreeable relish, what would become of the birds ! How small a scantling of such choice delicacies, would voracious man resign to their enjoyment ? that provision may be made for the meanest vagrant of the air, as well as for the most renowned sovereign of a nation ; there is, in all places, a large growth of shrubs, covered annually with a harvest of coarse and hardy berries. So

* Mr. Maundrel tells us, he measured one of the cedars of Lebanon, and “found it six and thirty feet and six inches thick ; its branches spread an hundred and eleven feet , its trunk from the ground was about sixteen feet, and then divided into five branches, each of which would make a large tree”.

† See for a proof of this remark, the explanation of the tenth plate, in that very curious, very entertaining, and no less instructive piece, intitled *Micrographia Reformatæ*.—Where our author compares the size of this little vegetable, with the dimensions of those vast trees, which grow in the vigorous climates of Guinea and Brazil.

‡ That whitish kind of down, which flags the putrefying pickle ; which incrusts the surface of some corrupted liquors ; and constitutes what we call mouldiness ; is really a cluster of little plants. Each has a root and a stalk ; each spreads its branches, and produces seed in abundance.

coarse in their taste, that they are unworthy of the acceptance of man: so hardy in their make, that they endure the extremest severities of the weather; and furnish the feathered tribe with a standing repast, amidst all the desolations of winter.

The fir, with her silver bark, and shapely cone; the beech *, with her quivering leaves and embowering shades, are stately decorations of our rural seats. But, if there were no entangling thickets, no prickly thorns, where would the farmer procure fences, so closely wattled, or so strongly armed †? how could he guard the scene of his labours, or secure his vegetable wealth and from the flocks herds? those roving plunderers, which accede to no treaty, but that of forcible restraint; submit to no laws, but those of the coercive kind.

Most people are fond of the Purslane's fleshy leaves, and the Brocoli: the Potato's mealy orbs, and the Lentile's succulent pods. We spare no toil, we grudge no expence, to have them flourish in our gardens, and served up at our tables.—But there are innumerable herbs, which pass under the contemptible character of weeds; and yet are altogether as desirable to many classes of creatures, as these culinary gifts to mankind. Who shall be at the pains to plant, to water, to cultivate, such despicable productions? man would rather extirpate, than propagate, these incumbrances of his acres. Therefore providence vouchsafes to be their gardener. Providence has wrought on their seeds into such a lightness of substance, that they are carried abroad with the undulations of the air. Or, if too heavy to be wafted by the breeze, they are fastened to wings of down, which facilitate their flight. Or else, are inclosed in a springy case; which, forcibly bursting, shoots and spreads them on every side.—By some such means, the reproducing principal is disseminated; the universal granary is filled;

* Isai. vii. 19.

† Something to this purpose is hinted in the prophecy of Isaiah, there shall not come thither, the terror of thorns and briars. Meaning those sharp and ragged mounds, with which vineyards, corn-fields, and other cultivated spots, were usually inclosed.

and the universal board furnished. The buzzing insect, and the creeping worm, have each his bill or fare. Each enjoys a never-failing treat, equivalent to our finest venison, or to the "fat of kidneys of wheat".

As the seeds of some plants are most artfully scattered abroad, when ripe; the seeds of others are most carefully guarded, till they come to maturity; and, by both contrivances, every species is not barely preserved, but in a manner eternized.—Some are lodged in the center of a large pulp; which is, at once, their defence, and their nourishment. This we find exemplified in the tasteful apple, and the juicy pear.—Some, besides the surrounding pulp, are inclosed in a thick shell, hard and impenetrable as stone.—We cannot pluck and eat one of those downy Peaches, or incrimsoned Nectarines, which so beautifully emboss the wall, without finding a proof of this precaution.—Cast your eye upon the Walnuts, which stud the branches of that spreading tree. Before these are gathered, the increase of the cold, and the emptiness of the gardens, will sharpen the appetite of the birds. To secure the fine kernel from the depredations of their busy assailing bills, it is fortified with a strong inclosure of wood, and with the addition of a disgustful bitter rind.

If grass was as scarce as the Guernsey-Lily; or as difficultly raised as the delicate Tuberoses; how certainly, and how speedily, must many millions of quadrupeds perish with famine! Since all the cattle owe their chief subsistence to this vegetable, by a singular beneficence in the divine economy, it waiteth not, like the corn-field and the garden bed, for the annual labours of man*. When once sown, though ever so frequently cropped, it revives with the returning spring, and flourishes in a kind of perennial verdure. It covers our meadows; diffuses itself over our plains; springs up in every glade of the forest; and spreads a side-board in the most sequestered nook.

* The fat of kidneys of wheat, Duet. xxxii. 14. A sentence, rich with elegance, such as would have shone in Pindar, or been admired by Longinus.

† Mic. v. 7.

Since the nutriment of vegetables themselves, lies hid under the soil, or floats up and down in the air: beneath, they plunge their roots † into the ground, and disperse every way their fibrous suckers, to explore the latent, and attract the proper nourishment; above, they expand a multitude of leaves ‡, which, like so many open mouths, catch the rains as they fall; imbibe the dews as they distil: and transmit them through their nice orifices, to the heart of the plant, or the lobes of the fruit.

I have touched upon the insensible creation; and pointed out the care of a condescending providence, exercised over these lowest formations of nature.—The animal world, *Theron*, falls to your share. It is yours, to descant upon those higher orders of existence: yours, to shew us the goodness of GOD, extending its indulgent regards to them, their welfare, and all their interests—And how pleasing a speculation must it be, to consider the universal parent, spreading the wings of his benevolence, wide as the arches of heaven, over the immense household of his creatures! cherishing all the families of earth, and air and skies, as tenderly, as officiously, as the hen ‡ cherishes her infant brood, when she opens to them her warm bosom, and covers them with her soft vital down.

Ther. The subject is in good hands. Let part the second be of the same strain with part the first, and there will be no occasion to wish for a new speaker. As to myself I have very little inclination to talk. But I have an ear open and attentive to your discourse.

Asp. You put me in mind of the philosopher, who presumed to read a lecture on the art of war, in the presence of Hannibal. But his impertinence was voluntary, mine is constrained.—Since you injoin me this office, let us pass from the vegetable, to the animal world. Here we shall not find any tribe, nor any individual neglected. The su-

†† Job very beautifully refers to these two sources of vegetable fertility; my root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch. Job xxix. 19.

‡ This seems to be the image, to which the Palmist alludes. Phil. cxi. 9. This is the express representation, which our SAVIOUR uses. Mark xxi. 37. And a most amiable image, as well as a most picturesque representation, it is.

perior classes want no demonstration of their excellent accomplishments. At the first glimpse, they challenge our approbation; they command our applause. Even the more ignoble forms of animated existence, are most wisely circumstanced, and most liberally accommodated.

They generate in that particular season, which is sure to supply them with a stock of provision, sufficient both for themselves, and their increasing families.—The birds lay their eggs, and hatch their young, when myriads of new-born, tender insects swarm on every side. So that the caterers, whether they be the male or female parents, need only to alight on the ground, or make a little excursion into the air; and they meet with a feast ready drest, and all at free cost, for the clamant mouths at home.—If the sheep are an exception to this rule, it is because they are consigned over to the maintenance and protection of man.—Because, they are tame and will admit, are valuable and will recompense, his assiduous attendance. He therefore, when they yean, fills their cribs with fodder; and this fills their udders with milk. The lambs, hardened by the cold, become vigorous and lively: and, when their milky diet fails, they find a profusion of nutrimental herbage on the soil.

Their love to their offspring, while they continue in a helpless state, is invincibly strong. Whereas, the very moment they are able to shift for themselves; when the parental affection would be attended with much solicitude, and productive of no advantage; it vanishes, as though it had never existed.—The hen, while marching at the head of her little brood, would fly in the eyes of a mastiff, or even encounter a lion, in their defence. Yet, within a few weeks, this inexpressible tenderness turns to indifference. She abandons her chickens to the wide world, and not so much as knows them any more.

If the GOD of Israel inspired Bezaleel and Aholiah with wisdom, and understanding, and knowledge in all manner of workmanship †: the GOD of nature has instructed, has

† Exod. xxxi. 3.

furnished with skill and caution, the wild inhabitants of the bough.—The skill, with which they erect their houses, and adjust their apartments, is inimitable. The caution with which they secrete their abodes from the searching eye, or intruding foot, is admirable. No general, though fruitful in expedients, could plan a more artful concealment. No architect, with his rule and line, could build so commodious a lodgement.—Give the most celebrated artificer the same materials, which these weak and unexperienced creatures use. Let a Jones, or a De moivre, have only some rude straws or ugly sticks; a few bits of dirt, or scraps of hair; a sorry lock of wool, or a coarse sprig of moss; and what works, fair with delicacy, or fit for service, could they produce?

We extol the commander, who knows how to take advantage of the ground. Who can make the sun and wind fight for him, as well as his troops. And, by every incident, embarrasses the forces of the enemy, but expedites the action, and facilitates the success of his own. Does not this praise belong to our feathery leaders? who pitch their tent, (or if you please) fix their pensile camp, sometimes on those lofty, sometimes on those projecting branches; that wave in the upper regions of the air, or dance over the eddies of the stream. By which judicious disposition, the vernal gales rock their cradle, and the murmuring waters lull their young. While both these circumstances, so advantageous to themselves, terrify the shepherd, and keep the school-boy, at a trembling distance.—Some hide their little household from view, amidst the shelter of intangled furze. Others remove it from reach, in the center of a thorny thicket. By one stratagem or another, they are generally as secure and unmolested, in their feeble habitations, as the foxes, which intrench themselves deep in the earth; or as the conies, which make their houses in the ground.

If the swan has large sweeping wings, and a prodigious stock of feathers, to spread over her callow brood, she

wren makes up by contrivance, what is deficient in her bulk.—Small as she is, she intends * to bring forth, and will be obliged to nurse up, a very numerous issue. Therefore, with the correctest judgment she designs, and with indefatigable assiduity finishes, a nest proper for her purpose. It is a neat Rotund; lengthened into an oval; bottomed and vaulted with a regular concave. To preserve it from rain, it has several coatings of moss. To defend it from cold, it has but one window and only a single door; or rather, the window and the door are the same. To render it both elegant and comfortable, it has carpets and hangings of the finest softest down.—By the help of this curious mansion, our little lady becomes the mother of multitudes. The vivifying heat of her body is, during the time of incubation, exceedingly augmented. Her house is like an oven, and greatly assists in hatching her young. Which no sooner burst the shell than they find themselves screened from the annoyance of the weather; and most agreeably reposed, amidst the ornaments of a palace, and the warmth of a Bagno.

Perhaps, we have been accustomed to look upon the insects, as so many rude scraps of creation, and to rank them amongst the refuse of things. Whereas, if we examine them, without prejudice, and with a little attention, they will appear some of the most finished pieces of divine workmanship.

Many of them are decked with a profusion of finery.—Their eyes are an assemblage † of microscopes: whose mechanism is inconceivably nice; whose polish is exquisitely delicate; and whose whole form is touched into the high-

* Alphonso has ventured to say, she intends—And one is almost tempted to think, from the preparation which the little creature makes, that she had really set down, and counted the cost, and concerted her scheme. As though she had deliberated with herself—“I shall lay, not a couple of eggs, but near a score. From these I am to produce a house full of young. But how shall I have warmth (unless air supply, what nature has denied), sufficient to hatch the embryos, or cherish the infants?”—

† The common fly, for instance. Who has many natural enemies; and, by a certain petulant fatuosity, or malapert officiousness, creates to herself many more. Whenever she has a fancy for it, she will take a lion by his beard, and makes no scruple to set her foot, upon the nose of a king.

est perfection. Their cloathing has all the variety and lustre of colours. It is set with an arrangement of pearl, of diamonds, and gold. It is bordered with fringes, or lined with furs, richer far than silks and velvets. In short ; their cloathing is not to be equalled, as to delicacy and splendour, even by the most brilliant court : no, not amidst all its blaze of gems, and pomp of dress.

Their wings are the finest expansions imaginable. Cambric is mere canvass, and lawn is coarse as sack-cloth, compared with those inimitable webs. The cases, which inclose their wings, glitter with the most glossy varnish ; are scooped into ornamental flutings ; are studded with radiant spots ; or pinked with elegant holes.—Not any among them but are equiped with weapons, or endued with dexterity, which qualify them to seize their prey, or escape their foe ; to dispatch the business of their respective station, and enjoy the pleasures of their particular condition.

Now I am in a talking humour, give me leave to celebrate the endowments, and assert the honors of my puny clients. Yet, not so much to support their credit, as to magnify their all-gracious CREATOR.—What ? if the elephant is distinguished by a huge proboscis ? his meanest relations of the reptile line, are furnished with curious antennæ* ; remarkable, if not for their enormous magnitude, yet for their ready flexibility, and acute sensation.—By which they explore their way, even in the darkest road : they discover and avoid, whatever might defile their neat apparel, or endanger their tender lives.

Every one admires that majestic creature the horse ; his graceful head, and ample chest ; his arching neck, and flowing mane ; his cleanly turned limbs, and finely adjusted motions. With an impetuous bound, he flings himself

* Antennæ, are those very slender parts, which, resembling horns or bristles, grow on the head of various insects. Some, as some naturalists conjecture, for a sort of weapon, to defend the eyes when endangered ; or acting as a kind of towel, to wipe them when sullied. Others suppose, that creatures use them, as a blind or dim sighted man uses his staff, to examine the road, and feel out his way. In conformity to the Office, they are frequently called Feelers.

over the ditch; and with a rapid career, pours himself* through the plain. With unwearied application, he carries his rider from one end of the country to another; and with undaunted bravery, rushes into the fiercest rage, and amidst the thickest havock of the battle.—Yet the ant, in proportion to its size, is equally nimble; equally strong; and will climb precipices, which the most courageous courser dares not attempt to scale.—If the snail is slower in her motions, she is under no necessity of treading back the ground, which she has passed. Because, her house is a part of her traveling equipage. So that whenever she goes abroad, she is still under her own roof; and wherever she straggles, is is always at home.

Let none suppose that being charged with weight of her apartment, she toils under an oppressive burthen. No; the all-wise projector of this portable mansion, has given it two very singular advantages; an extraordinary solidity, and an uncommon lightness. By means of the former, the inhabitant dwells in security. By means of the latter, the habitation is transferred with ease.—Were her eyes sunk as low, as the body which she trails along the ground, they would yield but little service, and be exposed to continual danger. Both these evils are prevented by an expedient, which none but a GOD, who is wonderful in counsel, could have devised; and which none but a GOD, who is infinite in benignity, would have devised for such a reptile. As the fly has her microscopes the snail has her telescopes. Her eyes fixed on the extremity of four delicate shaped tubes†. Surpassing, as to curious contrivance and wonderful agency, far surpassing, all the instruments in the Optician's shop, and every artificial rarity in Sloane's collection.—These tubes, terminated with their living glasses, the dextrous ma-

* Pours himself—this is Jeremiah's beautiful and expressive phrase, Chap. viii. 6. Which Virgil has been ambitious to imitate;

—*Ruuntque effusi Carcere.*

—*Sese effudere Quadrigæ.*

† You are not to imagine, that those projections, which are commonly called the Snail's Horns, are really such. They are four tubes, with a glass fixed in the extremity of each; or they may be called four optic nerves, ending in as many beautiful eyes.

See *Mss. Dial. Vol. I.*

nager lengthen or contracts, at her pleasure ; straitens like an arrow, or bends like an osier. These she sheaths in her head, when she has no occasion to use them, nor any inclination to look about her. Or else, elevates them to a considerable height ; turns them in any direction ; and applies them to any object.—How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O GOD ? how rich thy munificence ! And both vouchsafed (most amiable condescension !) even to a crawling insect ! surely then the children of men may reasonably, may confidently put their trust under the shadow of thy wings *.

But see ! The Eagle stretches her pinions, and demands our notice. The Eagle is privileged with pinions, that outstrip the wind. Elevated on which, she looks down on all that soars ; and sees flying clouds, and straining wings, far below. Her optic nerve so strong, that it meets and sustains the dazzling beams of noon ; her wide surveying glance so keen, that, from the most towering heights, it discerns the smallest fish, which sculks at the very bottom of the river. The mole, it is true, is none of your sprightly or exalted geniuses ; but an humble hardy drudge. The mole, I am sensible, is no favourite with mankind ; but despised and persecuted, as an abominable outcast. Yet even this poor outcast, in her groveling and gloomy state, is far from being disregarded by divine providence. Because she is to dig a cell in the earth, and dwell, as it were, in a perpetual dungeon, her paws serve her for a pick-axe and spade. Her eye, or rather her visual speck, is sunk deep into a socket, that it may suffer no injury from her rugged situation : it requires but a very scanty communication of light, that she may have no reason to complain of her darkling abode. I called her subteranean habitation a dungeon ; and some people, perhaps, may think it a grave. But I revoke the expression. It yields her all the safety of a fortified castle, and all the delight of a decorated grot.

Even the spider, though abhorred by mankind, is evidently the care of all-sustaining heaven. She is to live upon plunder ; to support herself, by trepaning the idle, in-

* Psal. xxxvi. 7.

significant, sauntering fly. Suitably to such an occupation, she possesses a bag of glutinous moisture. From this she spins a clammy thread, and weaves it into a tenacious net. Expert as any practiced sportsman, she always spreads it in the most opportune places. Sensible that her appearance would create horror, and deter, the prey from approaching her snare, when watching for sport, she retires from sight. But constantly keep within distance, so as to receive the very first intelligence of what passes in the toils; and be ready to launch, without a moment's delay, upon the struggling captive. And what is very observable, when winter chills the earth, and no more insects ramble amidst the air, foreseeing that her labour would be vain, she discontinues her work, and abandons her stand.

I must by no means forget the little monarchy, which inhabits the hive. The bees are to subsist, not as a lawless banditti, but as a regular community. It is theirs to earn a decent livelihood by honest industry; not to glut themselves with carnage, or enrich themselves by rapine. For which purpose, they are actuated by an invariable inclination to society. They possess the truest notions of domestic oeconomy, and have enacted the wisest laws for political government.—Their indulgent CREATOR has made them a present of all necessary implements, both for constructing their combs, and for composing their honey. They have each a natural pannier, with which they bring home their collected sweets: and they form for themselves the most commodious storehouses, in which they deposit their delicious wares.—Though made for peace, they know how to use the sword. They can take up arms with the utmost resolution and intrepidity, when arms are requisite to guard their wealth, or repel their foes.—Without going through a course of botany, they can readily distinguish every plant, which is most likely to yield the materials proper for their business. Without serving an apprenticeship in the laboratory, they are complete practitioners in the art of separation and refinement. They are aware, without borrowing their information from an almanack, that the vernal gleams, and summer suns, continue but for a season. Mindful of

this admonition †, they improve to the utmost every shining hour; and lay up a stock of balmy treasures, sufficient to supply the whole state till the blossoms open afresh, and their flowery harvest returns.

Let the peacock boast, if he pleases, his elegant topknot and lofty mien; his neck adorned with varying dyes, and his train bespangled with a round of stars.—Yet let him know, that the despised butterfly, and even the loathed caterpillar, are as sumptuously arrayed as himself. Their gems sparkle with as high a lustre, their robes glow with as great a profusion of colours. Nay; all their ornaments have, in point of elegance and delicacy, just the same superiority to his, as the phaeton engraved on a connoisseur's ring ‡, as to the phaeton carved in a statuary's shop.

Does beauty sit in state on that lordly bird? she shines in miniature on the vulgar insect. Is the master of this lower creation, ennobled with the powers of reason? the meanest classes of sensitive existence, are endued with the faculty of instinct. Which gives them a sagacity, that is neither derived from observation, nor waits for the finishings of experience: which, without a tutor, teaches them all necessary skill: and enables them, without a pattern, to perform every needful operation. And, what is far more surprising, never misleads them, either into erroneous principles, or pernicious practices: never fails them, in the nicest or most arduous of their undertakings ¶.

Can you have patience, to follow me, if I step into a different element, and just visit the watery world?—Not one among the innumerable myriads, which swim the boundless ocean, but is watched over by that exalted eye, whose smiles irradiate the heaven of heavens. Not one, but is supported by that almighty hand, which crowns Angels and

† *Venturaeque Hyemis memores, Aestate Laborem
Experiuntur, Et in medium quaesita reponunt.* VIRG.

‡ See DERHAM'S *Phys. Theol.* B. viii. C. 4.

¶ In his, says Pliny, speaking of insects, *tam parvis atque nullis, quas Ratio, quanta Vis, quam inextinguibilis Perseus.*

Archangels with glory.—The condescending GOD, has not only created, but beautified them. He has given the most exact proportion to their shape, and the gayest colours to their apparel ; a polished smoothness to their scales, and a remarkable sleekness to their skin. The eyes of some are surrounded with a scarlet circle ; the back of others is diversified with crimson stains. View them, when they glance along the stream, or while they are fresh from their native brine ; and the burnished silver is not more bright, the radiant rainbow is scarce more glowing, then their vivid, glistering, glossy hues.

Yet, notwithstanding the finery of their apparel, we are under painful apprehensions for their welfare.—How can the poor creatures live, amidst the suffocating waters ?—as they have neither hands, nor feet nor wings, how can they transact their affairs, or how escape their enemies ?—we are soon freed from our fears by observing, that they all possess the beneficial, as well as ornamental furniture of fins. These, when expanded, like masts above, and ballast below, poise their floating bodies, and keep them steadily upright. We observe, with farther satisfaction, the flexible play, and vigorous activity of their tails. With which they turn short ; spring forwards ; and shoot themselves through the paths of the sea, more swiftly than sails and oars can waft the royal yacht.—But we are lost in wonder, at the exquisite contrivance, and delicate formation of their gills. By which they are accommodated, even in that dense medium, with the power of breathing, and the benefits of respiration. A piece of mechanism this, indulged to the meanest of the fry ; yet surpassing, infinitely surpassing, in the fineness of its structure, and the facility of its operation, whatever is curious in the works of art, or commodious in the palaces of princes.

Ther. Some persons, Aspasio, have the art of giving dignity to trivial, and spirit to jejune topics. I cannot but listen, with a pleased attention, to your discourse ; though it descends to the lowest scenes, and meanest productions of nature.—To make such philosophical remarks, was usually my province ; to add the religious improvement, yours. But my thoughts, at present, wholly taken up with the con-

sideration of my SAVIOUR's righteousness. I can hardly turn my views, or divert my speech, to any other subject. All those amiable appearances of the external creation, which I was wont to contemplate with rapture, afford but a languid entertainment to my mind.—Till my interest in this divine REDEEMER is ascertained, the spring may bloom; the summer shine; and autumn swell with fruits: but it will be winter, cheerless, gloomy, desolate winter in my soul.

Asp. You say, *Theron*, you attended to my cursory hints. Then, your own superior discernment could not but perceive, how every part of the exterior world is adjusted, in the most excellent and gracious manner.—Not the coarsest piece of inactive matter, but bears the impress of its MAKER's fashioning skill. Not a single creature, however insignificant, but exhibits evident demonstrations of his providential care. His hand is liberal, profusely liberal, to all that breaths, and all that has a being.

Let me only ask—and to introduce this question, with the greater propriety; to give it a more forcible energy on our minds; was the principal design of the preceding remarks—let me ask; *does GOD take care for oxen* *? is he a generous benefactor to the meanest animals, to the lowest reptiles? are his munificent regards extended farther still, and vouchsafed even to the most abject worthless vegetables? and shall they be withheld from *you*, my dear friend, or from *me*?—not one among all the numberless productions, which tread the ground, or stand rooted to the soil, wants any convenience, that is proper for its respective state. And will his heavenly FATHER deny *Theron*, what is so necessary to his present comfort, and his final happiness? impossible †!

C c

* 1 Cor. ix. 9

* I know not how to forbear transcribing a paragraph, from one of our periodical papers; which contains a proposal for adapting natural philosophy to the capacity of children. Wishing, at the same time, that the ingenious author would enlarge his sketch into a treatise; and execute the plan, which he has so judiciously projected, and of which he has given us so delicate specimens.

Ther. I wish for, but I can hardly hope to partake of, that spiritual blessing ! which always included my whole happiness, and now ingrosses my whole concern.

Asp. *Not hone to partake of!*—What pretence, what shadow of foundation, has this desponding temper, either in reason, or in scripture ? is it not evident from the whole book of revelation ? is it not apparent, through the whole compass of nature ? that the Almighty LORD, “ who governeth the world with the palm of his hand *,” is remote, infinitely remote, from a niggardly disposition. He not only provideth for the wants but even *satisfieth the desire of every living thing †*.

Consider those stately *poppies*, which are now the principal ornament of the garden. They have no tongue to request the least favour. Yet the evergracious MAKER, clothes them from his own wardrobe, and decks them with exquisite beauty.—Observe the young ravens, which sit carelessly croaking on yonder boughs. Do they cry ‡ for food ? it is in hoarse unarticulate accents. Yet the all-supporting GOD, hears meaning in their noise ; and supplies their every need, from his own spontaneous bounty.—If he accommodates the former, though incapable of asking ; if he attends to the latter, though insensible of their benefactor ; can he disregard our pressing wants ? will he reject our earnest petitions ? especially, when we seek such pure and exalted gifts, as it is both his delight and his honor to bestow.

O ! My friend, look abroad into universal nature, and look away every disquieting thought.

Ther. Did you inquire what pretence I have for this desponding temper ! Alas ! I have more than a pretence. I have a reason. A reason too obvious ; my great unworthiness !

Asp. Pray where was the worthiness of the stiff-necked Israelites ? yet the LORD bare them, and carried them, all

* Eccles. xlviii. 3.

† Psal. cxlv. 16.

‡ Psal. cxlvii. 9.

the days of old *—where was the worthiness of Saul the blasphemer? Yet the blessed JESUS made him a chosen vessel, and set him as a signet on his right-hand.—You deserve nothing at the hand of GOD our SAVIOUR. And what did Joseph's brethren deserve from the viceroy of Egypt? yet he delivered them from famine, who sold him to slavery. He settled them in the choicest territories, who cast him into the horrible pit. He shewed himself a friend and a father to those unnatural relations; who were his actual betrayers, and his intentional murderers.—And can you persuade yourself, will you harbour a suspicion, that CHRIST is less compassionate than Joseph? shall a frail mortal out-vie IMMANUEL in beneficence?

Ther. Is not some righteousness of our own indispensibly required, in order to our participation of the righteousness of CHRIST?

Asp. Yes, such a righteousness as Zaccheus the publican, or the Phillippian jailor possessed.—Zaccheus was a man of infamous character, and chief among the extortioners. The jailor was a barbarous persecutor, and in purpose a self-murderer. Yet our LORD says to the former; this day, without enjoining any course of previous preparation; this very day, will I abide at thy house. And bring even to such a scandalous † dwelling, impart even to its profligate ‡ owner, my great salvation. St. Paul directs the latter, without insisting upon any antecedent duty or reformation, to believe on the LORD JESUS. And assures the poor sinner, trembling on the very brink of despair, that, in so doing, he shall be saved.

“ Thus, might he have added, was I myself saved. Not
 “ while I was exercising righteousness; not when I had
 “ obtained righteousness; but in the very midst of my
 “ ungodliness and cruelty. While I was breathing out
 “ threatenings and slaughter, against the disciples of my
 “ LORD; nay, when I was drawing nigh to Damascus,

• *Isai. lxii. 9.*

† Scandalous—-for the neighbours say, on this occasion, he is gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner a notorious sinner. See the import of such a connexion, Luke vii. 37.

‡ Profligate—-neither is this to severe a censure on Zaccheus. Because, none but an abandoned shameless wretch—no son of Abraham till he was lost to all sense of decency would undertake the office, which the chief of the publicans exercised.

“and upon the point of executing the most diabolical designs”.

Are not these remarkable cases, so many acts and precedents of the court of heaven? were they not recorded for our observation, imitation, and comfort?—if so, nothing is required, in order to our participation of CHRIST and his benefits, but only that we receive them. Receive them, as the freest of gifts, or as matter of mere grace, vouchsafed to the most unworthy.

Ther. Is it not necessary, that we have, at least, a conviction of our need of these benefits, and a sense of their unspeakable worth?

Asp. Not as the condition of our enjoying them. Not as giving us a warrant to claim or possess them. The proper business of such convictions is only to act as stimulatives; exciting us, earnestly to covet, gladly to receive, the unspeakably needful gifts.—Come; only come; is our MASTER’s language. Without staying to acquire any goodly-qualities, is his meaning.—Our REDEEMER and his benefits, are like a free port. You enter, without paying any duty. And though the plague, the plague of guilt be in your vessel, you need not stay to perform quarantine; no, nor delay a single moment.

Ther. Surely, to come without any holiness, without any decent preparative, must be a gross indignity to the divine JESUS. Whoever presents a petition to any earthly sovereign, will think it absolutely necessary, not to appear in a slovenly deshabbille, much less in filthy raiment. Does not our LORD himself in the parable of the wedding-garment, inculcate this very point, and caution us against a presumptuous approach?

Asp. In this parable, CHRIST is both the bridegroom, the feast, and the wedding-garment*. And who are invited to an union with this bridegroom? to be guests at this feast? to be arrayed with this wedding-garment?—the messengers are sent, not to the mansion-houses of the rich, or the palaces of the mighty; but to the *high-ways* and

* Matt. xxii. 11. Hæc Nescit Jurare CHRISTI, BENGEL, in Loc.

hedges. Where misery ; mourns ; and poverty pines ; and baseness hides her head.—To whom is their message addressed ? not to the amiable or accomplished. But to the poor, the maimed the halt the blind †. Persons who have no recommending endowments, but every lothesome and disgusting property. Yet these (mark the passage, my friends mark well the encouraging circumstance) these are not only allowed, but intreated—importuned—and, by all the arts of persuasion, by every weighty or winning motive, compelled to come in. After all this, surely, it cannot be an act of presumption to accept, but must be a breach of duty to refuse the invitation.

Ther. You take no notice of the man, who was found without a wedding-garment. Which is by far the most alarming incident, and that which gives me no small uneasiness.

Asp. And does my Theron take proper notice, of the divine declaration? I have prepared my dinner says the KING eternal. All things are ready ‡ “ whatever is necessary for “ the justification, the holiness, the complete salvation of “ sinners, is provided in the merit and the grace of my “ SON. Let them come therefore, as to a nuptial banquet ; and freely enjoy my munificence ; and feast their “ souls with the royal provision.”

The man without a wedding-garment, denotes the specious superficial professor ; who is called by CHRIST's name but has never put on CHRIST JESUS by faith.—Shall I tell you more plainly, whom this character represents ; you yourself, my dear Theron, was, some months ago, in the state of this unhappy creature. When you trusted in your self, and thought highly of your own, thought meanly of your SAVIOUR's righteousness.—If your former mistakes made you resemble him, like a partner or a brother ; take heed, lest your present objections rank you in the number of his neighbour or cousins.

Let us imitate a better example. imitate the returning prodigal. He came, with no recommendation, either of

† Luke xiv. 13.

‡ Mat. xxii. 4.

dress, of person, or of character. None but his nakedness, his misery, and an acknowledgment of vileness, which had every aggravating, not one extenuating circumstance. Yet he was received—received with indulgence—received with caresses—and, without staying to provide any handsome apparel of his own, was clothed with that best robe, the robe of a SAVIOUR's righteousness.

Let us accustom ourselves to consider this incomparable robe, under its proper evangelical character. It is not a matter of bargain, nor the subject of sale, but a gift, the gift of righteousness, says the apostle. And gifts, we all agree, are not to be purchased, but received.—That we may not unaccountably neglect, what we so perfectly know, the parable you mention, is a strong, standing, seasonable admonition. It teaches us another kind of fear, than that which has alarmed your mind. It teaches us to fear, lest, by not accepting this sacred gift, we incur the divine displeasure.

Ther. How, Aspasio ! Can this be the sense of the passage ?

Asp. The guests, you know, consisted of poor outcasts. They were collected from the high-ways and hedges. Now we cannot suppose, that people in such circumstances, from such a situation, and coming at a minute's warning, should be able to furnish themselves with a dress, suitable to the grand occasion. We must therefore suppose, (which is very conformable to the eastern customs) that the king had ordered his servants, to accommodate each guest from the royal wardrobe. That each might have this additional token of his sovereign's favour ; and all might be arrayed in a manner, becoming the magnificence of the solemnity.—The unhappy person, who *was bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness*, had, no doubt, an offer of the nuptial suit. But he refused, either to receive it, or to wear it; and rudely made his appearance in his own garments.—Which, however they might comport with his private station, or answer his personal conveniencies, were infinitely too mean for his illustrious ceremony.—The king, resenting such a behaviour, as an insult on his Majesty, and a contempt of his bounty, most justly condemned the negligent

and disdainful wretch to a severe punishment. A punishment, you will observe, not for the commission of former iniquities, but for the refusal of present grace.

Ther. "The refusal of present grace!" Is this the only crime, with which you can suppose him or me chargeable?

Asp. Not the only, but it is the most provoking, and the most destructive crime.

Ther. Is nothing then, nothing to be done on our part?

Asp. You are an admirer of nature, Theron. Read your favourite book, or hear your favourite author.

Nature is christian, preaches to mankind,
And bids dead matter aid us in our creed.

Ther. Explain yourself, Aspasio. I should be glad to find in the volume of nature, any thing adapted to remove my distress, and encourage my hopes.

Asp. When the ALMIGHTY made man, and placed him in this habitable world, did he say? "here is a dwelling place, furnish yourself with accommodations. Here are materials; let your own skill form the trees, the fruits, the grain."—Or did he say? "here they are, ready formed to your hand; only do something, in order to qualify yourselves for them, or entitle yourselves to them."—No; his language was; "they are fully prepared. You are welcome to make use of them all. They are my free gift, to my needy creatures".

In like manner, when he sent his SON into the world, to make the atonement for sin, and to work the justifying righteousness, he said not to fallen man; "do your part in this grand business. At least make yourself, in some degree, meet for these benefits."—No; but he spoke, or rather now speaks in the gospel, to this effect. The work is all done; with a perfection that is absolute, and admits of no addition. The benefits are, not to distinguish merit, but to recover the ruined. Therefore, as ruined, undeserving, guilty creatures, you are welcome to apply and enjoy them all".

Ther. What! Is not heavenly-mindedness to be exercised? no victory over our lusts gained? no fruits of sanctification produced?

Asp. These legal apprehensions! How closely they cleave to my Theron's mind! But I hope, the word of God which pierceth to the dividing asunder the soul and spirit, will give the severing blow.—And what says that sacred word? it describes the gospel, as a *will* or *testament**: and all its glorious blessings, as legacies bequeathed by the dying *JESUS*.—When your old acquaintance *Charicles* left you a handsome legacy; what did you do, to establish your title and make it your own?

Ther. My title was pre-established, by my friend's donation. I had nothing to do, but to claim, to accept, and to possess.

Asp. Do the very same, in the present case. *CHRIST*, having merited pardon, and obtained eternal redemption, made his last will, and recorded it in the new testament. There he disposes of those unsearchable riches. And who are his Legatees? not the holy or the heavenly minded but sinners, lost sinners of mankind. Under this character, you are to claim, accept, and possess the great *TESTATOR*'s beneficence.—Sure you cannot suppose, that *CHRIST*'s kindness is less sincere, or that *CHRIST*'s donations are less valid, than those of an earthly defunct.

Ther. This illustration hardly reaches the point. I speak not of doing any thing, under the notice of *merit*, but of *Qualification*. That which may not entitle us to *CHRIST*, but only prepare our way to him.

Asp. By such notions, instead of preparing your way to *CHRIST*, you fill it with stumbling-blocks, precipices, and deep pits.—as to qualification, if there be any such thing, it is our extreme indigence; and this, I presume, you are not without. Other qualification, neither reason prescribes, nor scripture requires.

* Heb. ix. 16, 17. This notion not only runs through the scriptures, but stands conspicuous even in their title page.—What are they called? *THE OLD* and *THE NEW TESTAMENT*. What is a testament? an authentic deed, in which estates are transmitted, and legacies bequeathed. In other testaments, some earthly possession; in this, the heavenly patrimony, even all the riches of grace, and the everlasting inheritance of glory. Had we consider the scriptures in this light, it would be a most engaging invitation, to search them with avidity and pleasure. What child is willing to continue ignorant of a deceased parent's last will and testament? who does not covet to know what honors, hereditaments, and wealth devolve to his enjoyment, by such an interesting and venerable conveyance?

Reason prescribes no other.—The gifts of the eternal SOVEREIGN are intended, not to recognize our imaginary worth, but to aggrandize our ideas of his immense liberality. They are intended to shew forth the exceeding riches of his goodness ; which pardons and saves, not only without merit, but against demerit. To answer *such* a design, the unworthy and the sinners are duly qualified ; nay, are the *only* qualified persons.

Scripture requires no other.—The ever-merciful SAVI-OUR says not ; they are unqualified for my salvation. They have no valuable or noble acquirements. But this is his tender complaint ; *they will not come to me*, just as they are ; with all their sins about them ; with all their guilt upon them ; *that they may have life* *.

Pray, take notice of this text ; and you will see things placed in a new light. You will behold CHRIST under a new character, and his benefits ranged in a new order. Sanctification, heavenly-mindedness, and a victory over our lusts are not the qualities which he requires, but the blessings which he confers. Not what we bring to him, as introductory conditions ; but what we receive from him, as the fruit of his sufferings, and the effect of his grace.

Ther. “ The unworthy and sinners, the *only* qualified ! ” Of this expression I cannot but take particular notice. — Then *Judas* should stand in the first rank of qualified persons ! while the devout centurion, whose prayers and tears came up as a memorial before GOD, must thereby be unqualified for the favor of heaven.

Asp. If you observed my expression, I spoke in the hypotheticalal manner †. ~~M~~ade a supposition, rather than advanced an assertion. ~~I~~f there be any qualification, this is

U D

* John v. 40.

* If the reader should think, that Theron's objection is not fully answered, the deficiency may, in this manner, be supplied. Judas was sufficiently qualified, as a lost sinner ; but he refused the grace, through distrust and despair. On this point, instead of being unqualified for, was an actual partaker of divine grace. Which inclined him to offer up sacrifices of acknowledgment, after he had relied on the only sacrifice of atonement. See Vol. I. page 285.

the only one. But strictly speaking, there is no such thing. The impulsive or inclining cause of all GOD's goodness exercised, is—from the creature? no; but from himself, himself alone. He has mercy, not because this or that person is amiable, is meet, or qualified, but because he will have mercy.—As for our need of mercy and reconciliation, arising from a state of sinfulness, this can no more constitute a real qualification for the blessings, than an act of rebellion can qualify for the first honors of the state.

But this we must allow; that such need, such misery, such sinfulness, illustrate the freeness, and manifest the riches of grace. This also we should never forget, that GOD's first and leading purpose, in all his favourable dispensations to fallen man, is, to demonstrate the sovereignty, and display the glory of his grace.—The LORD, promising a very extraordinary deliverance to Israel; promising all the blessings of the new covenant, says; not for your sakes, be it known unto you, do I this * signal act of kindness.—For ye have disobeyed me in your own land, and dishonored me among the Heathen.—What then is the inducement? we find it in the following declaration; I, even I am IHV, that blot out your transgressions for my own sake †. Because, I am unspeakably kind. Because, I delight in loving-kindness, and have pleasure in the salvation of sinners.—What is the end of all? It is *for the praise of the glory of his grace* ‡. A proper motto for all the displays of divine benevolence to sinful creatures. Especially, for the gift of a perfect and everlasting righteousness. Which is, to man the blessing of blessings; and to GOD the glory of glories.

Ther. This is a gift indeed!—To be interested in all the merits of CHRIST! To have his immaculate righteousness imputed to my soul!—So that from henceforth there shall be no fear of condemnation, but a comfortable enjoyment of freest love, and a delightful expectation of completest glory!

* Ezek. xxxvi. 34.

† Isa. xlii. 25.

‡ Eph. i. 6.

Asp. Admirably spoken ! Of all these blessings CHRIST's righteousness is truly meritorious, and certainly productive. And why should you not by receiving the latter, enjoy the former ? why should diffidence, like a malignant spectre, haunt your thoughts ; thwart your paths ; and hold back or unnerve your hand ?

If this rich donation, surpass your very thoughts, and fill you with grateful astonishment ; it is so much the better adapted to exemplify, what the scripture very emphatically styles, the abundant, the superabundant, the exceeding abundant * grace of our GOD.—GOD is a boundless ocean of love ; ever flowing, yet absolutely inexhaustible. See ! What an innumerable variety of benefits, are transmitted from yonder sun, to gladden all the regions of nature ! Yet the sun is but a spark ; its highest splendor, no more than a shade ; its uninterrupted and most profuse communications of light, a poor diminutive *scantling* ; compared with the riches of divine *benignity*.

The servant in the parable, who owed ten thousand talents †, craved only some merciful forbearance. Whereas, his generous lord remitted the whole sum, and gave him an acquittance in full ; *I forgave thee all that debt ‡*.—You wonder, and very deservedly, at such vast generosity. But, what had been your admiration, if you had seen the noble master admitting this obnoxious slave, to a share in his dignity ? what, if he had made so worthless a wretch, the child of his family, and the heir of his estate ? this, you are ready to say, would exceed the bounds of credibility. Yet GOD Almighty's stupendous beneficence exceeds all this. He not only spares guilty creatures, but makes them his *children* ; makes them *inheritors* of his kingdom ; and, as an intro-

* 2 Cor. ix. 14.

† If these were talents of gold, the sum would amount to seventy-two millions sterling. If only talents of silver, the debt would have been four millions, four hundred thousand pounds. Hence, our LORD most significantly intimates the vast number, and the enormous magnitude of our offences against GOD ; together with our utter incapacity, of making any satisfaction ; and his most magnificent grace, in freely forgiving all.

‡ Matt. xviii. 32.

duction to all, or rather as the crown of all, makes them *partakers* * of his son.

Ther. The gift is inestimable; of more value than all worlds. It will render me blessed and happy, now and for ever.

Asp. Then it is perfectly agreeable to *the glorious gospel of the blessed GOD*. Hear, what the first writer in the christian church says, upon this charming subject.—“The gospel comprehends, a discharge from punishment; a remission of sins; the gift of righteousness; the endowment of sanctification; redemption from every evil; the adoption of sons; the inheritance of heaven, and a most endeared, a conjugal relation to the infinitely majestic SON of GOD. All these divinely precious privileges preached, presented, vouchsafed, to the foolish, to the disobedient, to enemies.”

Ther. May such unworthy persons look for blessings, so superlatively excellent?

Asp. Unworthy!—My dear friend dwell no longer on that absolute topic. Remember the poor ragged creatures that sat shivering and starved under the hedges. Were they worthy to receive an invitation, they worthy to be allowed admission, to a magnificent court and a royal banquet?

Assure yourself, the greatest unworthiness is no objection in GOD's account. Since he never looks at any thing amiable in the creature, that may engage him to shew mercy; nor yet at any thing abominable in the creature, that may withhold him from shewing mercy. Not for your sake, but for my own sake, is his invariable decree.

Wish regard to worthiness, this is as much disavowed by the gospel, as *equivocal* * generation is exploded by the modern philosophy. The gospel being a gracious provision,

* The ancients imagined, that many vegetables and insects were produced by, I know not what, plastic power in the sun and other elements. This is called *equivocal* generation. Whereas, the *modern* Philosophers maintain, that every individual of this kind, derives its being from some parent-vegetable or parent-animal. This is styled *univocal* generation. The former opinion is now universally rejected, as irrational, chimerical, and to the first principles philosophical.

made, by the supreme royal prerogative, for the relief of the *ruined*, and the salvation of the *ungodly*.

Nay ; this notion of yours is diametrically *contrary* to the gospel, and totally subversive of the covenant of grace.

Ther. In what respect ?

Asp. Because it would make our own duty and obedience the terms. Whereas, the terms were CHRIST's suffering, and CHRIST's obedience. These are hinges on which that great transaction turns, and on which the hope of the world hangs.

Ther. Be more particular, Aspasio.

Asp. The covenant was made with Adam, for himself and for us. Breaking it, he lost his original righteousness, and became subject to death. Became at once a *bankrupt* and a *rebel*. In this guilt, in this misery, we and all his posterity shared — Now you cannot suppose, that the almighty MAJESTY would enter into a fresh covenant, with an *insolvent* and *attainted* creature. It pleased, therefore, the SECOND PERSON of the adorable TRINITY, to undertake our cause ; to become our surety ; and put himself in our stead. *With him* the second covenant was made. He was charged with the performance of the conditions ; thereby to obtain pardon and righteousness, grace and glory, for all his people. *I have made a covenant*, says the LORD JEHOVAH, not with fallen Adam, or any of his guilty race, *but with my CHOSEN ONE**. And the terms were (you will permit me to repeat the momentous truth) not your worthiness or mine, but the incarnation, the obedience, the death of GOD's ever-blessed SON.

Ther. Has man then no office assigned, no part to act, in the covenant of grace ?

Asp. He has : but it is a part, which my friend seems very loth to discharge. His part is to *accept* the blessings, fully purchased by the SAVIOUR, and freely presented to the sinner. His part is not to dishonor the REDEEMER's

* Psal. lxxxix. 3. It is generally allowed, that this psalm, in its sublimest sense, is referable to CHRIST : and in its full extent, is referable only unto CHRIST,

gracious interposition, and infinitely sufficient performance, by pretending to any merit of his own. His part (why will you constrain me to reiterate in this manner?) is not to bring money in this hand, with the ten brethren; but, with an empty hand, and like an impoverished *Lazarus*, to take hold of *GOD's covenant* †.

Ther. If this be the nature of the new covenant, I must confess, that I have hitherto been ignorant of it, and of the gospel.

Asp. And from hence arises your present distress. To this, not to your unworthiness, but to this I ascribe your perplexity and anguish.—You are a philosopher, Theron; and have been accustomed to examine the proportion of objects, rather than to weigh them in the balance of the sanctuary. Here, you find such accounts of divine grace, and such distributions of divine favour, as break through and supersede all the rules of equity and proportion, maintained among men. This quite overthrows your conclusions, drawn from the *fitness* of things.—Overthrows, did I say? let me correct myself. Is it not fit, that we should, however unworthy in ourselves, magnify the grace of our *GOD*?

Ther. Most certainly.

Asp. How can this be done, but by expecting great and superlatively precious blessings from his hand?—Alexander, you know, had a famous, but indigent philosopher, in his court. Our adept in science, was once particularly straitened in his circumstances. To whom should he apply, but to his patron, the conqueror of the world? his request was no sooner made, than granted. Alexander gave him a commission, to receive of his treasure whatever he wanted. He immediately demands, in his sovereign's name, ten thousand pounds.—The treasurer, surprised at so large a demand, refuses to comply: but waits upon the king, and represents the affair. Adding withal, how unreasonable he thought the petition, and how exorbitant the sum.—Alexander heard him with patience. But, as soon as he had ended

† *Iſai.* lvi. 4.

his remonstrance, replied; “let the money be instantly paid. I am delighted with this philosopher’s way of thinking. He has done me a singular honor. By the largeness of his request, he shews the high idea he has conceived, both of my superior wealth, and my royal munificence”.

Thus, my dear Theron, let us honor, what the inspired penman styles, *the marvelous loving-kindness of JEHOVAH*. From the king, *whose name is the LORD of hosts*, let us expect—I say not, what corresponds with our low models of generosity—I say not, what we suppose proportioned to our fancied deserts—but what is suitable to the unknown magnificence of his name, and the unbounded benevolence of his heart. Let us expect such divinely rich blessings, as surpass all created power, and all human apprehension.—Then we shall no longer be afraid, assuredly to trust that gracious declaration, *JESUS CHRIST is made of GOD unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. JESUS CHRIST hath given himself for us, and does give himself to us; together with all the blessings of his purchase, from the pardon of our daily infirmities, even to eternal life in glory.*

Ther. Yes; upon condition, that we fight the good fight, and finish our course of duty. *Henceforth*, says the apostle; after this is done, *there is laid up for me, and for other victorious soldiers, for other faithful labourers, a crown of righteousness.*

Asp. But is it vouchsafed, on account of their successful warfare, or persevering obedience? if so, *Israel may vaunt themselves, and say; none other hand, not the REDEEMER’S interposition, hath saved me**.

Not to repeat what has already been alledged, in opposition to this opinion—not to produce what might be urged, from a variety of scriptural testimonies—I shall only desire you to observe; what the Apostle himself adds in this very place. *There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness; but is this the pay, proportionate or owing to his own ser-*

* Judg. vii. 8.

vices? is it what he claims and demands, on the foot of duty performed?—the very title of the reward implies the contrary. It is *a crown of righteousness*, because purchased by the meritorious and consummate righteousness of *CHRIST*. — The action of the judge declares the contrary: *which the LORD, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.* It is, you see, a gift; an act of favour; the issue of unmerited bounty: what neither saint, nor martyr, nor apostle enjoys, but only by way of gracious donation*.

You have been complaining of your guilt. Why will you increase and aggravate it? why will you add robbery to all your other transgressions.

Ther. Robbery!

Asp. Yes, *Theron*. By all this bad we have to receive *CHRIST* and his benefit, you are robbing him (*GOD*); robbing him of the bright and glorious crown which the honor of—his free grace—his rich mercy—his matchless, incomprehensible, heavenly bounty.

Ther. Ah! My *Asp.* said you don't know my state. You cannot conceive my guilt. I was, by nature, a child of wrath. I have been, by practice, a slave of sin. What is worse I am still corrupt: have still a carnal heart. — And has not such a wretch forfeited all title to the divine favour: nay, does not such a wretch deserve the vengeance of eternal fire?

Asp. That we all deserve this misery, is certain beyond dispute. I am glad, that we are sensible of our horrible villainies. Now we are to believe, that the *LORD JESUS* has satisfied divine justice: has paid an immensely glorious price, on purpose to obtain for such damnable wretches,

— — — — —
 Tim. 4. 8.

* I believe no one experienced in the human life will suspect, that *Theron* speaks of this character. — Conscience, when once alarmed, is a stubborn and unceremonious thing. It pays no deference to wealth, it never stands in awe of grandeur: neither can it befooled by the straining of learning. And we generally find, that a most unaccountable propensity to self-worminess, strongly possesses the newly awakened sinner. He is perpetually running on, founded on the want of personal merit, notwithstanding all our remonstrances, to quiet his fears, and move his jealousies. It is indeed a hard task, of a mind, naturally heaved with legal pride, to come naked and wretched to *CHRIST* -- to come, in the absence of every recommendation, but that of extreme wretchedness; and receive, from the hand of an unmerited bounty, the free gift of evangelical grace.

both for the manifestation, and all the fruits, of the divine good-will. According to the import of that charming scripture, "When we were enemies" (and what is there in an enemy to bespeak favour, or deserve benefits?) "We were reconciled to GOD by the death of his SON *."

You have great guilt.—But is this a reason, why you should be prohibited the blessings of the covenant? Contemplate the state of that forlorn and wretched outcast, described in the sixteenth of Ezekiel. An infant in its blood; this represents a sinner, who has nothing to excite love, but all that may provoke abhorrence. Hear what the HOLY ONE of Israel says, concerning such a one. When I saw thee washed, and purified, and made meet for my acceptance? No; but when I saw thee polluted in thy blood †; loathesome with defilement, and laden with iniquity. Then, even then I said unto thee, "live: I spread my skirt over thee; and thou becamest mine." Can you think of any reason, why such a sordid object should be cherished and caressed, but mercy alone; more mercy, properly so called? Yet this is the manner of GOD's proceeding, not barely with one people, but with sinners of every denomination; not in one period of time only, but through all ages and all generations.

You are *still corrupt*.—What then! Does this hinder you from being relieved by the SAVIOUR's righteousness? does it not rather prove you to be one of those, whom he came to seek and to save?—You are a governor of the county-hospital, Theron. You have been industrious in promoting, and are active in supporting, that excellent institution; where medicine with her healing stores, and religion with her heavenly hopes, act as joint hand-maids to charity.

E E

* Rom. v. 10.

† The words are peculiarly emphatical; not only doubled, but doubled. To denote, at once, the strangeness of the fact, yet the certainty of the favour. When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, live: yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, live. Ezek. xvi. 6.

What are circumstances, which render any persons the proper objects, for an admission into your infirmary?

Ther. Their poverty and their distemper. Without poverty, they would not need; and free from distemper they would not prize, the benefit of our modern Bethesda.

Asp. Apply this to the case under consideration. The whole world is in a state of spiritual disorder. CHRIST is styled, by the inspired writer, the LORD our healer*. The gift of his righteousness, the balm of his blood, and the influences of his spirit, are the sovereign restorative. And sure it cannot be a fanciful persuasion of our health, but the real misery of our disease, which renders us proper objects of his recovering grace.—*He came, not to call the righteous, but sinners*†. To give them repentance, and newness of life; which he effects, by giving himself to them, as their whole salvation.

Ther. But, if any foolish and refractory patients have abused our beneficence; it is a standing unalterable rule of the house, never to admit them a second time; however pressing their exigences, or however powerful their recommender. I have, not once only, but through the whole course of my life, abused the marvelous loving-kindness of the LORD.

Asp. And is not the LORD superior to all his creatures, in acts of pardon, as well as of power? Yes; as those heavens are higher, than this prostrate earth; so much more enlarged and extensive is the divine clemency;—than the widest sphere of human kindness, shall I say? Rather than the boldest flights of human imagination.

* Exod. xv. 26.

† *He came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* Matt. ix. 13. Many persons, I am apt to suspect, mis- take the meaning of this lovely passage; and turn the freely flowing benefits of the gospel, into the rigorous requirements of the law.

They reckon, our LORD's calling to repentance, is like a school-master calling the scholars to their task, or like a householder calling his servants to their work. Whereas, it is like Joseph, the governor of Egypt, calling his brethren, each to receive a suit of apparel, and ad to partake of his hospitable banquet.

CHRIST, as a SAVIOUR, is the greatest of benefactors. When, therefore, he calls to repentance, his intention is, not to demand, but to bestow; not to enjoin, but to impart.—*He is come, says the apostle, to give repentance.* Acts v. 31.

Since Adam fell, no mortal uninspir'd,
Has ever yet conceiv'd, or ever shall,
How kind is GOD *.

Your statutes are inexorable, in case of one notorious irregularity committed. But the free gift of a REDEEMER's righteousness is vouchsafed, notwithstanding *many offences, unto justification* †. It is the glory of our Almighty RULER, and redounds to the honor of his crucified SON, to pass over ‡ not a single transgression only, but a multitude of provocations; to be altogether as unequalled in mercy, as HE is absolutely supreme in majesty.

As it is the *greatest pride*, to entertain high notions of our own accomplishments, or to expect eternal life on the score of our own obedience; so it will be the greatest affront to the grandeur of CHRIST's merits, and the freeness of his grace, if we suppose our crimes too heinous to be forgiven, or our persons too vile to be accepted.

Ther. I have often thought: if I was as holy and righteous, as some persons, whom I know; if I had such dominion over my evil affections, and brought forth such fruits of righteousness, as I have observed in some christians; I could then confidently believe.

Asp. Then you would lay your own holiness and righteousness, as a foundation for your faith; not the infinitely tender mercies, and the undeniably sure promises of the LORD. In this case, you would act like the man, who purposes to dig his materials from a cloud of smoke, not from the stones of the quarry.

Besides; this method would not only miscarry, but contradict the design of CHRIST's coming. He came to save sinners, and to justify the ungodly. According to your notion; he must come to save the righteous, and to justify the godly. He must be a physician, not to the diseased, but to the healthy; and his blood must cleanse, not the defiled, but the pure.

* Night-Thoughts. † Rom. v. 16. ‡ Prov. xiv. 31.

Whatever my friend may have thought, I will not scruple to affirm ; that, if he was indeed a righteous and godly person, the **LORD JESUS**, as a **SAVIOUR**, would have nothing to do with him. But, being a sinful and ungodly man, I will venture to add, what the people said to blind Bartimeus ; *Be of good comfort, he calleth thee. Callest thou, that thou mayst be justified, sanctified, saved. Therefore, come boldly to HIM*, rely cheerfully on him, that you may obtain this great mercy, and share this rich grace.

Theron paused.—These considerations seemed to operate : this anodyne to take effect.—Discours to improve the favourable juncture, and impart more strong consolation, Amos added.

How often d'd the inhabitants of Jerusalem disregard the warnings, and reject the counsels of our blessed **LORD** ! How justly might **H** have sworn in his wrath ; “ They shall never hear the joyful sound of my gospel more. The blessings, which they have so wantonly despised, and so wickedly abused, shall be irrevocably withdrawn.”—Instead of passing such a sentence, this is the charge, which, after his resurrection, he gives to his Apostles : “ Let repentance and remission of sins be preached, in my name, to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*.”—At Jerusalem **LORD** ! Have not the men of that ungrateful and barbarous city been deaf to thy tenderest importunities ? Did they not pervert thee unto condemnation and death ? Did not their weapons, still reeking, as it were, with thy blood, and their tongues still shooting out arrows, even bitter words ? By which they would murder thy character, as they have already crucified thy person.”—Yet these wretches (and could any be more inhuman ? Could any be more unworthy ? are not only abhorred, but unto them is the message of grace, and the word of salvation sent. **Nay**, to shew the unparalleled greatness of our **REDEEMER**'s grace, these are first upon the heavenly list. The glad tidings of pardon and life, which are to be published through the world, must begin (amazing mercy !) must begin at Jerusalem.

Ther. Thus much I may venture to profess in my own behalf: that I long for this blessing—I pray for this blessing—But I cannot see my title, to this comprehensive and inestimable blessing, clear.

Asp. I behold it perfectly clear. Not because you long for it. But because CHRIST and his righteousness are granted * unto you, in the sure irrevocable record of the gospel.

Ther. Can you mention a passage, in which these precious blessings are granted?

Asp. Easily and readily. *If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink.*—Some days ago, a worthy clergyman, who lately came to settle in the neighbourhood, did himself the honor of making one at your table. After dinner, you shewed him your library; we took a walk in your garden; and made the agreeable tour of the fishponds.—Then—with that amiable frankness of mien and accent, which is so peculiar to my friend, and endears all his favours.—You told him; “that he was as welcome to any “book in your study, as if the whole collection was his “own. That if, on a visit from some acquaintance of superior rank, he should wish to be accommodated with a “more delicate entertainment than usual; the productions “of your waters, and of your hot-beds, were intirely at his “service. And that his acceptance of your offers, without the least shyness or reserve, would be the most pleasing compliment, he could pay you on the occasion”.

* By this grant, we have a title to CHRIST: yes, says Mr. Boston, by virtue of this grant, “CHRIST is ours, even before we believe. Not that we have a saving interest in him, or are in a state of grace: but that we have a common interest in him, and the common salvation; which fallen Angels have not. So that it is lawful and warrantable for us, not for them, to take possession of CHRIST and his salvation.”—See Mr. BOSTON’S notes upon a book, entitled *the marrow of modern divinity*.

A book, designed to guard equally against antinomian licentiousness, and legal bondage. The thoughts are just and striking; the arguments solid and convincing, the diction is familiar, yet perspicuous; and the doctrine exceedingly comfortable because truly evangelical.—The notes are, I think, a master-piece of candid and judicious criticism. In which the nice discernment of the logician, lifts, distinguishes, and adjusts the rich furniture of the divine.—Perhaps, I may venture to say, that this little treatise pours as much light upon the gospel and grace of CHRIST; and, together with the notes, affords as many important distinctions in divinity, as any book of its size whatever.

Ther. Why do you leave the sacred text? why desist from opening the treasures of scripture; only to gild a potsherd, and make earth and ashes vain?

Asp. Not to make Theron vain, but to make him ashamed of his distrust. In the manner of doing this, I follow the example of my unerring MASTER. He deduces his argument for faith in the everlasting FATHER, from the sensations which earthly parents feel towards their children. He appeals, even to the experience of *bad* men, and to the yearnings of *their own* bowels, for a vindication and display of the divine compassion. *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly FATHER give good things, to them that ask him* †? But we return to the application of our text.

Thus said my friend. And what says the PROPRIETOR of all good?—*If any man*, however unworthy his person, or obnoxious his character, thirst—Thirst for something to make him truly happy.—Saying, with them of old time “who will shew us any good?”—Let him come unto ME, the fountain of living waters, and not only taste, or sip, but drink his fill.—Though he has hitherto been shewing to himself broken cisterns, and labouring for that, which satisfieth not. Nay, though he has frequented the polluted stream and not only beguiled himself with vanity, but defiled myself with iniquity. Yet let him return, to me, and he shall neither meet with a repulse, nor find his wishes mocked. He shall obtain substantial satisfaction, even the forgiveness of his sins, the true righteousness, and everlasting life ‡. Since then the invitation is so absolutely free, what have you to do, but, without scruple or doubtfulness, to drink? To receive the promise as your portion, and to look upon the blessings as your own?

That clergyman has not the least suspicion of being disappointed, in case he should send for a brace of carp from

† Matt. vii. 11.

‡ Not to rest in these blessings, can be meant by the *drink* which CHRIST gives, as nothing less than this, can satiate the weary soul.

your canal, or a fine melon from your garden.—Why is he so confident? because he has done you any signal service? No! But because you have passed your word, and made the generous offer.—And why should you harbour the least doubt concerning the divine veracity? Why should you call in question your right to these heavenly treasures? Since it is founded on a grant, altogether as free, altogether as clear, as your own intelligent concession; and infinitely more firm, than human engagement. Founded on the fidelity of that sublime BEING who “remembers his covenant” and promise to a thousand generations.”

Ther. It is impossible to confute, yet difficult to believe, what you urge.

Asp. What I urge, is not the voice of a few dubious passages, nicely culled from the book of GOD, or forcibly wrested by the interpretation of man. The whole tenour of inspiration runs, with the greatest perspicuity, and greatest uniformity, in this delightful strain.—Let me, out of a multitude, produce another express from the court of heaven. *He! Every one thirsteth, come ye to the water, even he that hath no money. Come ye, and eat; ye? come buy wine and milk, without money and without price*.*—*Wine and milk*, signify the justification of our persons; our sanctification thereby: and the hope of eternal glory. These are nourishing and refreshing to the soul, as milk the richest of foods, and as wine the best of cordials, are to the body.—These, you see, are to be received and enjoyed, *without money, and without price.* Without any merit of our own; without any thing deducted from ourselves; by poor, unlearned perishing bankrupts.—They are thus free for every one. No exception is made. No exclusive claim allowed. It is not said, any one that is worthy; but every one, thirsteth.—and this is mentioned, not as a qualification entitled; but as connecting the invitation with those circumstances†, which

* *Isai. lv. 1.*

† *Those circumstances*—that is, the unhappiness and misery occasioned by sin; which and not any gracious habits, are set forth under the notion of bankruptcy. It is think all men,

must make it more eminently gracious, and more particularly interesting.—To leave no room for any misgiving apprehensions, the kind invitation is repeated, *buy and eat; buy wine and milk.* The invaluable yet free tender, is confirmed again and again; *he that hath no money; without money; without price.* And both are pressed upon us with a very remarkable ardour, with the most affectionate vehemence; *come ye; come ye; yea, come.*

Had our heavenly BENEFCTOR permitted us to draw up this instrument of conveyance, and word it according to our own wish, what language could we have contrived, to render either the grant more free, or our claim more secure?

Ther. These are cheering truths; and as a cogent, as cheering. They amount to little less than a demonstration. Methinks, him ready to profess, in the language of *Agrippa; almost thou persuadest me,* to trust and not to be afraid.

Asp. If I have almost persuaded, my GOD will altogether persuade. This is the work of his blessed SPIRIT. Which he accomplishes, by such gracious words, and such encouraging words, as those we have been quoting.—And can you distrust the sincerity of the divine overtures? If the overtures are real, your title is unquestionable.—Nay, there is more than an overture. You have an natural gift, from the Almighty MAJESTY. *To us,* says the prophet a child is born †. To us—he repeats the precious truth,

in also run to and fro some one way, some another. The gospel points out the only way of doing so, and invites us to make use of the happy expedient.

Exposition. *Isa. l.* *Thirst for the grace of GOD, and for the blessings of the gospel;* says Mr. Poole. Whole annotations though on critical points are accurate, on historical heads, so truly evangelical, as might be wished.—“This thirst, he adds, implies with a vehement, and active desire of grace. Does not such an exposition place the greatest part of mankind, yea even of the visible church quite beyond the compass of this gracious invitation?—But to our unspeakable comfort, the following verse decides the question, against the celebrated commentator, and in favour of the miserable sinner. The thirsty are those, who spend their money for that which is not bread, and then labour for that which satisfieth not. Which is the case with unreasonable, foolish, wicked men. These therefore are invited. Whereas, they who thirst for grace, whose thirst is vehement and active, they are not spending their money at this unprofitable rate. On the contrary; they are labouring for that, which is substantial bread, and, of all things in the world, most satisfying.”

to declare his exuberant joy *, and denote the absolute certainty † of the thing—a son his given. Even GOD'S own SON, the ever blessed JESUS, to be our PROPITIATION our SURETY, our complete REDEEMER.

Just cast a look upon yonder neat lodge. Though placed in the center of a spacious field, it seems to be contiguous with the extremity of the vista, which it terminates. The eye, traveling over such a length of ground, has almost lost the windows, and the decent ornaments of the front. But I shall not soon lose the idea of that amiable munificence; which, as I was rambling one pleasant morning, and accidentally called at the house, I learned from its present owner.—He was, I find, one of your servants. Had spent several years in your family. When he settled in the world, you bestowed upon him that commodious box, and a pretty adjacent farm, to possess, without molestation or controul, during his life.—Does he not reckon the little estate, by virtue of your donation, to be his own? As much his own, for the time prescribed, as if he had paid an equivalent in money?—Since the LORD has given us his SON, and all his unutterable merits; why should we not, with an assurance of faith, receive the gift, and look upon it as our own? Why should we not confide in a gift from JEHOVAH; and reckon it firmer, than the firmest deed? far more inviolable, than any royal patent?

Ther. My servant never affronted my authority. If he had vilified my character, or insulted my person, should I then have been inclined to make the same advantageous settlement?

F F

* Virgil has copied the prophet's fine manner. He represents joy, uttering his sentiments in the same spirited strain, with the same reiterated earnestness:

—Humilemque videmus

Italiam. Italiam primus concernas. Achates.

Italiam læto Sæculi Clamore salutam.

† See Gen. xli. 32.

Asp. Herein appears the infinite superiority of the divine bounty. GOD is rich in mercy, not only to the obedient and grateful, but to the unthankful and unworthy. To the LORD our GOD, says the prophet, belong mercies and forgivenesses; in measure superabundant, and in continuance unwearied. And this notwithstanding we have offended him, by our manifold failures in duty. Nay, have rebelled * against him, by the most flagrant violations of his law.

In sweet concert with his prophetic lesson, sings the transported psalmist; thou, LORD, in thy sacred humanity, hast ascended up on high: ascended, from the low caverns of the tomb, to the highest throne, in the highest heavens. *Thou hast led captivity captive*: hast abolished death, that universal tyrant; and subdued those powers of darkness, which had enslaved the whole world.—Like a glorious and triumphant conqueror, thou hast also *received gifts*; not merely for thy own fruition, but to confer on others, by way of honorary and enriching largess.—What are those gifts, *Theron*?

Ther. The gifts of the gospel, I suppose: pardon of sin, the influences of the HOLY SPIRIT, and the various privileges of *christianity*. Which constitute the present happiness of man kind, and prepare them for future bliss.

Asp. You rightly judge.—And for whom were those royal, those heavenly donatives received? If you have an inclination to bestow, a finely-wrought piece of plate, or an exquisitely finished picture; what names present themselves to your thoughts? What persons are the objects of your choice? The *approved* friend, or *distinguished* favourite I make no question.—But for *whom* (let me ask again since it is a point of the last importance) were those heavenly donatives designed?

Ther. Let me recollect.—*Thou receivedst gifts*—not for fallen angels, but *for men*—and not for thy friends, but for thy enemies—yea, *for the rebellious* also.—Merciful heaven! What a word is this! And does it come from the

GOD of truth?—Gifts! Divine gifts! Gifts of unspeakable value, and eternal duration! And these to be conferred on enemies, on the rebellious! Wretches, who are destitute of all gracious qualifications; who deserve not the least favour; but have reason to expect the frowns of indignation, and the sword of vengeance!

Asp. Thus it is written, in those sacred constitutions; which are far more stedfast and unalterable, than the law of the Medes and Persians.—Thus it is spoken, by the mouth of that Almighty BEING; with whom there is no variableness, nor the least shadow of turning.—Let us not, my dear friend, by unreasonable unbelief, frustrate all these promises, and reject our own mercies. Let us not, by an evil heart of unbelief, make GOD a liar; and make ourselves, of all creatures most miserable.

Formerly, 'tis true, we used to consider the divine justice, as an unsurmountable bar to our happiness. In such a case, the just GOD and eternal misery, appeared inseparable ideas. But the gospel has shewed us an expedient, whereby it is consistent with the glory of all the divine perfections, to save even the worst of men. It shews us, how the LORD JEHOVAH may be *inflexibly just*, yet receive such *guilty wretches* to his mercy, his favour, his everlasting good-will. O! Let us not render this unexpected, and divinely rich grace, of none effect with regard to ourselves, by saying each in his heart; “ what signifies all this to me? Unless I
“ can find some superior excellency in myself—something,
“ whereby the DEITY should distinguish me, as his favour-
“ ite—for which he should respect me, as more deserving
“ than others.”

Ther. Thanks, *Aspasio*, many thanks for your admonition. It is both kind and salutary. Methinks, it begins to cheer my spirit, and dissipate my uneasy apprehensions. O! May these clouds on my mind, follow those in the firmament! For a considerable time, they hung abroad their extensive sails, to damp the ardour, and abate the glare of day. The sun has been colouring their fleecy skirts, and spreading over the floating screen a variety of intercomprehensible hues. Now he begins to edge them with gold, and shine them into silver. A sure indication, that (like the glittering, but transitory toys, which they represent) they

It soon be wept from the horizon, and seen no more.—The bright orb, while we are speaking, bursts the veil; and, from a voluminous pomp of parting clouds, pours a flood of splendor over all the face of nature.—We shall quickly perceive this open situation, too hot to consist with pleasure: and must be obliged to seek for shelter, in the shady apartments of the house.

Asp. We must. And will you admit me, *Theron*, into those shady apartments?

Ther. Admit you, *Aspasio*!—I am surprised at your question. I thought you had known me better: and am sorry, it should be needful to assure you, that my house is as much yours, as it is mine. The more freely you command it, the more highly you will gratify the owner.

Asp. May I believe my *Theron*? Does he speak from his heart? Or must I conclude, that he plausibly professes, what he has no intention to perform?—Would you be pleased if I should obstinately persist in these dishonorable suspicions, notwithstanding all your friendly protestations?

Ther. My dear *Aspasio*, I see your design. I see, and am ashamed. Ashamed to think, that I should fancy myself more punctual in my professions, than GOD is true to his word,—LORD, I believe. Help thou mine unbelief!



DIALOGUE XVI.

OUR friends had agreed upon a visit to Philenor. They rode through a fine, open, fruitful country. Which was covered with crops of ripened corn; and occupied by several parties of rustics, gathering in the copious harvest.

The *rye*, white and hoary as it were with age, waved its bearded billows, and gave a dry husky rustle before the breeze.—The *wheat*, laden with plenty, and beautifully brown, hung the heavy head; and invited, by its bending posture, the reaper's hand. Platts of *barley*, and acres of *oats*, stood whitening in the sun. Upright, and perfectly even, as though the gardiner's shears had clipped them at the top, they gratified the spectator's eye, and gladdened the farmer's heart — *beans* partly clad in native green, partly transformed and tawny with the parching ray, were preparing the last employ for the crooked weapon.—Some of the grain lay flat, in regular rows, on the new-made stubble. Some was erected, in graceful shocks, along the bristly ridges. Some, conveyed homewards on the loaded wagon, nodded over the groaning axle.

The villages seemed to be empty, and all their inhabitants poured into the plains. Here were persons of each sex, and of every age — The lusty youths, stooping to their work, plied the sickle; or swept, with their sythes, the falling ranks.—the sprightly females followed, binding the handfuls into sheaves, or piling the swarths into hasty cocks. Dispersed up and down were the children of the needy, gleaming the scattered ears, and picking their scanty harvest.

Nor were the old people absent; but crawling into the sun, or sitting on a shady eminence, they beheld the toils—the pleasing toils, which they once sustained.

This is the most joyful period of the countryman's life; the long expected crown of all his labours. For this, he broke the stubborn glebe, and manured the impoverished soil. For this, he bore the sultry beams of summer, and shrunk not from the pinching blasts of winter. For this, he toiled away the year, in a round of ceaseless but willing activity. Knowing, that the husbandman must labour, before he partakes of the fruits*.—And will not the blessed hope of everlasting life, will not the bright expectation of consummate bliss, animate us with an equally chearful resolution, both to resist the temptations, and discharge the duties of our present state?

Short seemed the way, and quick passed the time, as they traveled through such scenes of rural abundance, and rural delight.—Before they were aware, the horses stoped at Philenor's seat. Where they found, to their no small disappointment, that the master was gone abroad. They alighted however and took a walk in the gardens.

The gardens, at proper intervals, and in well-chosen situations, were interspersed with various pieces of statuary.—At the turn of a corner, you are—not shocked with a naked gladiator, or a beastly priapus—but unexpectedly entertained with the image of Tully. He is just risen from his seat, and upon the point of addressing himself to some important oration. A reverential awe appears in his countenance; such as silently acknowledges, that he is going to plead before the rulers of the world. His thoughtful aspect, and gracefully extended arm, speak to the eye, before the tongue has uttered a syllable. We look round for the venerable audience, and are agreeably surprised, to find nothing but hedges and trees.

You enter an alley lined on either side with a verdant fan; and having no variety of objects to diversify the intermediate space, your view is conducted to a magnificent

building at the end. As you walk along, contemplating the masterly performance in architecture, a sudden opening diverts your attention: and presents you with some striking imitation of virtuous or heroic life.—Not the *Macedonian* madman; nor *Sweden's* royal knight-errant; nor *Cæsar*, infamously renowned for his slaughtered millions; but the truly gallant *Czar*. A drawn sword in his hand, and a commanding majestic steinness on his brow. The weapon is held in the most menacing posture; and many a spectator has been observed to start-back, with apprehensions of fear. It is that gloriously severe attitude, in which the grateful citizens of *Narva* beheld him, and in which all posterity will admire him; when he turned upon his own victorious, but ungovernable troops, and threatened to drench the dagger in their hearts, if they did not immediately desist from rapine * and slaughter; immediately allow quarter to their vanquished foes.

If here the marble threatens, and the hero frowns, in yonder alcove the pencil has displayed a soter scene. There, in a lonely recess, and under the melancholy shades of Cypress, the brave *Abradates* claims our pity. Fallen is the generous warrior, and prostrate on the ground. See his manly features, serene and intrepid still, though a dying paleness has clouded all. Closed are those sprightly eyes, which used to glow with courage and martial ardour.—Closed, alas! never to be opened more; no, not to behold his amiable *Panthea*.—The amiable *Panthea*, kneeling on the earth, and bending over the corpse, has raised the lifeless head. Her own droops like a lily surcharged with rain; yet she has placed the lovely burthen on her arm, and bathed it with her tears. See! with what tenderness she supports it, and with what fondness cherishes it. While *Cyrus*, to express a distinguished regard for the deceased

* As soon as the soldiers were master of the town, (*Narva*) they fell to plunder, and gave themselves up to the most enormous barbarities. The *Czar* went from place to place, with but a stop to the disorder and misrule. He was even obliged to kill with his own hand several Muscovites, who did not hearken to his orders.

prince, clasps his cold hand. Distressing mistake! He starts, he is amazed, to behold that able and trusty arm, suddenly falling from the shoulder-blade. The tear swells into his eyes, and speaks the sorrow of his royal heart. But what can speak the anguish, which means in thy countenance, and rends thy heart, thou afflicted *Panthea*!—O! that thou hadst known the truths, and tasted the comforts of christianity! Then might thy resignation to providence have been as exemplary, as thy fidelity to thy Lord. For want of this most consolatory knowledge, what frantic and fatal purposes are forming in thy breast! We are shocked at the apprehension of so horrid a deed. We turn away from the sight, and would lose the very thought, in some more pleasing spectacle.

Behold a spectacle, more pleasing, and very different. Under a circular dome, supported by pillars of the Doric order, and in a spot where several walks center, stands—not the *Venus a Medicis*; corrupting, while it captivates, the world—but a *Spartan* mother. Her habit decent and graceful; somewhat like the *Juno Matrona* of the Romans, as she is finely depicted in Mr. *Steen's* *Polymetis*. Her air stately and resolved; expressive of dignity, yet mingled with softness. She holds a shield: is in the act of delivering it to her son; a youth, setting out for the army, and going to hazard his life, in the defence of his country. She is supposed to add that spirited and magnanimous exhortation, which is engraven on the protuberance of the buckle—*bring it back, my son, as thy trophy; or, be brought back upon it, as thy bier.*

I am particularly pleased, said Theron, with the contrivance of this last ornament. It is regulated by one of the most refined rules of art; not to lavish away all the beauty at a single view, but to make a skilful reserve for some future occasion.—The dome and the columns afford pleasure, when beheld at a considerable distance. The fine animated figure in the midst displays its graces, on a nearer approach. By which means, the attention is kept awake, and the entertainment continues new. But what I principally admire, is the spirit or style of the decorations in general. They put me in mind of a very

just remark, which Mr. *Pope* has somewhere made. It is, if I remember, right, to this effect.—“A man not only shews his taste, but his virtue, in the choice of his ornaments. “A proper piece of history, represented in painting on a “rich man’s walls, ‘or exhibited in imagery amidst his gar- “dens) is very often a better lesson, than any he could teach “by his conversation. In this sense, the stones may be said “to speak, when men cannot, or will not.”—All but the comparative or satirical part of the observation, I would apply to the prospect before us, and its worthy owner.

Asp. *Philenor’s* gardens are, I think, more chaste and delicate in their ornaments, than a certain collegiate church. In the latter place, we might reasonably expect the strictest adherence to purity, if we should not meet with the symbols of piety, and incitements to religion.—What then would be the reflections of a judicious observer, if in such a solemn and venerable edifice, he should see a huge brawny fellow stuck up against the wall! with his posturers half bare? his whole body more than half naked; and in an attitude none of the most decent *.—Excuse me, *Theron*. I confess myself ashamed, even to recite the description. How then can the spectacle itself become the house of divine worship?

Ther. But perhaps this same brawny fellow may represent a Heathen demigod; one of the idols worshipped by antiquity; the tutelary deity of valour.

G G

* Referring to the monument, lately erected for MAJOR GENERAL FLEMING, in *Westminster Abbey*. Which under the General’s bust are placed *Hercules* and *Pallas*, *Hercules*, with his club and lion’s skin, in the niche carved above *Pallas*, with a mirror and a serpent at her feet.—The reader may see a picture and an explanation of this monument, in the gentleman’s magazine for August 1764.

As this church has been the burial-place of the most illustrious personages, for many centuries; as it is the place, where all our kings receive their crowns, and many of them deposit their ashes, as it is singularly eminent for its antiquities and monuments, there is a large resort both of natives and foreigners, to view its grand and awful curiosities: What ever, therefore, is erected in a place so circumstanced and so distinguished, should not only display an air of elegance in the execution, but include a beauty of holiness in the design. It was thought, by a very able critic and a very candid writer, that mere impropriety of taste, in ornamenting one of the monuments, called for his censure. Surely then a violation of decency, and an approach to Paganism, called more loudly for public reprobation, and proper reformation. See *Spect.* Vol. I. No 26.

Ans. And will this justify the practice? Does not this add profaneness to immodesty? Are we christians to thank Hercules for the valour of our warriors, and 'make our acknowledgements to Pallas for the conduct of our generals? Shall we christians behold with admiration, or recognize as our benefactors, what the Apostle has stigmatized under the character of devils *?

If HE, who overthrew the tables of money-changers, had taken a walk in these famous cloysters, I am apt to suspect, he would have paid no very agreeable compliment to this fine piece of statuary. *Take these things hence, would probably have been his command; and, make not the precincts of your temple a chamber of Pagan imagery,* his rebuke †.—Neither is it at all unlikely, that the image itself, notwithstanding its inimitable workmanship, might have shared the fate of its kinsman Dagon.

—————When the captive art
Maim'd his brute image, head and han is lopt off
In his own temple, on the ground ell edge
When he fell flat, and sham'd his worshippers *.

Ther. But how should the artist express the great achievements and the shining qualities of his hero, if you will not allow him to make use of these significant emblems?

Ans. I question, whether they are so very significant. The mirror seems to characterize a fop, rather than a soldier. It leads us to think of a soft Narcissus, admiring himself; rather than a sagacious general, planning the operations of the campaign.—Besides; is sacred literature so destitute of proper emblems, that we must borrow the decorations of our churches, and the trophies of our conquerors, from the dreams or superstition or the delusions of idolatry? How just and expressive are those emblematical representations, exhibited in *Ezekiel's* vision? Where activity and speed are signified, by hands in conjunction with

* 1 Cor. x, 26.

† MILTON, B. I. 458.

wings; and the deep, the complicated, yet ever harmonious schemes of providence, by a *wheel in the middle of a wheel* *.—With what propriety and force are the nobles endowments pictured, in the revelations of St. John, and their grand machinery! Superior wisdom and benevolence of heart, are described by the face of man: strength of mind and intrepidity of spirit, by the visage of a lion; calmness of temper and indefatigable application, by the features of an ox; a penetrating discernment, and an expeditious habit of acting by the form of a flying eagle†.

These Hieroglyphics are graceful, are pertinent, and such as every spectator will understand. Whereas, the devices of our new monumental encomium are, to the unlearned, hardly intelligible; to the serious, little better than profane; and to every beholder, indelicate if not immodest.—*Phleonor*, I imagine, would blush to admit them into his walks or avenues. And I am sorry to find them received in the most antient, most renowned, and most frequented church in the kingdom.

Talking in this manner, they strolled into a spacious lawn, terminated by a very remarkable grove; formed on that uncommon plan, proposed by Mr. Addison, in one of his spectators.—It consists wholly of ever-greens. Firs, clad in vegetable silver, point their resinous leaves, and shoot aloft their towering cones. Laurels arrayed in glossy green, spread their ample foliage, and throw abroad their rambling boughs—Bay-trees are expanded into a fan, which no wheather can tarnish; rounded into a column, which knows not how to moulder. While the Laurustinus run out into a beautiful irregularity of shape; and compacts her reddening gems, in order to unfold her whitening bloom—In one place lies a dale, gently sinking, and coated with the Chæmomile's natural frieze; which never changes its colour,

* Rev. iv. 7.

† Ezek. i. 8. 10.

The antiquarians trace back the origin of this church, even to the reign of Enmerkar, more than the space of 2500 years, or by suppose that Nebert, King of the east-Saxons, about the year of our LORD 805, built the first religious edifice on this spot. All agree that it was re-edified and enlarged by Edward the Confessor, and that the present noble and magnificent fabric, was founded by Henry III.

never loses its gloss. Near it, and scooped, you would imagine, from the same hollow, rises a mount softly swelling, and fringed with furze; gay in their own perennial green, and generally decked with golden blossoms.—Here you are led through a serpentine walk and hedges of box; and find, perhaps a solitary pyramid or a capacious urn, each composed of unfading yew. There you look through a strait alley, fenced on either side, and arched over head with mantling philirea; at the extremity, appears an obelisk sheathed in ivy, and ornamented with its sable clusters, as with wreaths of living sculpture.—Scattered up and down, are several sorts of holly; some stripped with white some spotted with yellow; some preparing to brighten and beautify the scene, with berries of glowing scarlet.

The greatest part of the plantation is, not ranged in order, but thrown into little groups, or rude clumps. Which form an agreeable variety, resulting from art, yet resembling confusion.—The whole ascends, tree above tree, in a regular *slope*; from the diminutive mezereon, to the lofty cypress, or the loftier pine. By this disposition, the stems and trunks being concealed, nothing is displayed to your sight, but the leafy tops. The several shadings of whose attire, greatly diversified and judiciously intermixed, compose a magnificent *sheet* of verdure. To this the free and enlarged opening of the lawn, affords a full view, and gives the most advantageous aspect. Than which, especially in the winter-season, nothing can be more grand, more enlivened, or more pleasing.

Asp. There must be something wonderfully agreeable in a plantation, which appears lively and fruitful, when all its neighbours of the wood-land race, are barren, bleak, or dead. But how much more cheering and delightful must it be; when *decrepit* age, or bodily infirmities, have laid waste the gratifications of our youthful prime; to find a solid *undecaying* pleasure, in the favour of GOD, and the hope of glory!—Now indeed the feathered tribes resort to the more flowing umbrage of the poplar and the ash. But amidst *December's* cold, you shall observe them forsaking the *leafless* woods, and flocking to this friendly receptacle; hopping across the sunny walks, or sheltering themselves,

in the wet and stormy day, under these *trusty* boughs. So, the many thoughtless creatures, who turn their back upon religion, amidst the soft and soothing caresses of prosperity; will want, extremely want, its *sovereign supports*, under the sharp and distressing assaults of adversity, sickness and death.

This collection, it is true, may not equal the groves of annual verdure, in floridity of dress; but it far exceeds them, in the duration of its ornaments. Ere long, yonder shewy branches will be stript of their holiday clothes: whereas, these will retain their rural honors. *These* will be adorned with flowers, and enriched with berries; when those are nothing but rags, nakedness, and deformity.—Rags, nakedness, and deformity! Such will be every shelter, and every refuge for our poor, imperfect, sinful souls; excepting only the righteousness of our *LORD JESUS CHRIST*. Every thing else, will *fade as a leaf**; which the summer suns, but the winter is sure to destroy. This, my Patron, and this alone is an *ever-green*: always free for our recourse, and always effectual to save.

Ther. An ever-green it is; or rather, the choicest fruit in the garden of paradise. But it seems to be quite beyond my reach. *JESUS CHRIST* has finished every requisite, with his precious blood, which may procure acceptance for the guilty sinner, and afford relief to the guilty conscience.—

Ther. Of the most profane wretch, that lives.—Add this to your faith, or else you curtail the grace of *GOD*, and diminish the merit of *CHRIST*.

Ther. This is what I was going to add; I believe also, that if I was interested in this divine *SAVIOUR*, sinful as I am, my conscience would have peace, and my soul should live. But alas!—

Asp. Your manner of speaking brings to my mind, what I have somewhere read, concerning an infant born with a *snake* about its neck. A strange kind of necklace, you *will* say, for a human creature to come into the world with.

Perhaps, you will suspect, or even more than suspect that fancy must be the mother, and the midwife also, of this very singular birth. Yet have a care, you don't realize the story. You have made an excellent acknowledgment; which is like a fair and promising infant. These buts and ifs, these doubts and surmises, are a poisonous snake.—Tear away the mischievous incumbrance. Never suffer it to twist itself round the neck of your good confession.—You believe that CHRIST has thoroughly finished the great work. Believe also, that there is no clogging or intervening condition; no recommendatory duty to be performed, in order to your full participation of CHRIST; of his peace-speaking blood, and his life-giving righteousness.—only believe, and they are actually your own.

Ther. This is one of those sayings, which have often puzzled my mind. I cannot conceive, how such grand blessings, and such a complete felicity, should be made ours, only by believing.

Asp. This, or something very much like it, puzzled and offended *Naaman the Syrian*. “Wash! only wash! In *Jordan!* The common water of the commonest river! “can this be attended with such extraordinary consequences! can this cure a man of his inveterate leprosy?”—Thus we are apt to argue: only believe the report of the gospel! Only believe, that GOD freely gives us his incarnate SON, and all spiritual blessings with him! Is it possible, that this simple expedient should be productive of such noble effects?—Surely, if we would obtain remission of sins, deliverance from death, righteousness and everlasting life, we must *do some great thing*.

Faith, in this respect, is like its divine object. It “has no form nor comeliness;” nothing pompous or shewy. It seems a little thing. It really is a little thing. But it pleases the most high GOD, to compass his magnificent ends, by little and ordinary means. *CHRIST dwelleth in our hearts*, saith the apostle. How! By pious works and laborious pre-requisites? no; but merely by faith.—We received the SPIRIT. How? by the works of the law? by your own labour and travail? not only by the hearing of faith.

Besides; can you conceive any other rational way, whereby we may apprehend an unseen CHRIST, and take possession of a promised salvation, but only by assuring ourselves, that they are given to us; and, in consequence of this gift, regarding them as our own property?

Ther. At other times (so strange is my inconsistency!) I entertain such an idea of the greatness of faith, that I say within myself, "I cannot believe". My mind is, as you formerly hinted, like the withered arm.

Asp. This difficulty on your mind, because of the greatness of faith, is wholly founded on mistake. The gospel informs you, that whatever is necessary for your salvation, is already done and obtained by CHRIST. That whatever is done and obtained by CHRIST, is freely given you by the GOD of all grace. Consequently, that you are called only to receive a gift, not to perform a work.

You, on the contrary, suppose; that something more is to be done, something to be acquired or executed by yourself; before you may venture to call the riches of CHRIST your own. This creates the insuperable difficulty. This renders your mind like the withered arm.—Whereas, when these truths of the gospel are made manifest to your conscience; when you are enabled to see, that what CHRIST has wrought, is absolutely sufficient to procure all spiritual blessings; that what GOD has said, is equally sufficient to warrant an application of all to yourself; then HE who bids you stretch out, strengthens the withered hand.

And will he not strengthen? can you doubt the sincerity of his call, or his willingness to save the weak and the wicked? then go to mount *Calvary*. There listen to the sounding of his bowels, and see the flowing of his mercies*.—Cannot you read a language in each streaming wound, and hear a voice in every dying pang?—Do they not all speak his infinite love, even to wretched helpless sinners? do they not all address you with that tender remonstrance, *O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt*†?

* Isa, lxvi, 15.

† Matt, xiv, 31.

Ther. Still the difficulty recurs. Whether it be from any wrong apprehension, of some great thing to be done, or from an averseness of submitting to the way of salvation by grace; or an unaccountable distrust of the certainty of what GOD has promised; whatever be the cause, I am sure, I feel my impotence. Experience teaches me, what the other affirms: *no man can say*, with all his heart, *that JESUS is the LORD*, who hath bought me with his blood, *but by the HOLY GHOST*.

Asp. You feel your impotence—to what? to receive a free gift, and call it your own? to trust wholly, and without reserve, on the word which GOD has spoken, and on the work which CHRIST has wrought? consider the case in this view, or else you will not only feel, but occasion impotence. You will only find, but increase difficulty.

I would employ my thoughts, neither on the greatness nor littleness of faith; neither on the ease nor difficulty of believing. I would rather dwell upon the superabundant grace of GOD, manifested in CHRIST, and granted to the most unworthy. On this only proper ground of claim, I would endeavour, diligently endeavour, to assure my soul of salvation. In this manner, waiting and praying for the divine SPIRIT, whose office it is, to testify of CHRIST, and bring near the REDEEMER's righteousness. Yet his influences are not to supersede, but to encourage our own efforts.—Lay hold on eternal life*; here is our duty. Our sufficiency of GOD†; here is our encouragement. And O! what a glorious encouragement, to have the arm of omnipotence, for our support and our succour!

Ther. How, or in what manner, does the divine SPIRIT work faith in the heart of a sinner (you wonder, perhaps that I ask such a question. But my apprehensions are strangely dull, and my views very dim, with regard to spiritual things. If, in this respect, I have any sight, it is like his, who saw men as trees walking; saw these several objects but so confusedly, that he could not distinguish one from the other, only by the circumstance of motion.

Asp. The most enlightened minds see only in part; and all have reason, to make the blind beggar's supplication, their own request; LORD, that I may receive my sight! The operation of the holy SPIRIT in producing faith, is thus described by a master in *Israel*; "The divine SPIRIT
 " brings CHRIST and his righteousness nigh unto us in the
 " promise of the gospel; clearing at the same time our
 " right and warrant to intermeddle with all, with ut fear
 " of vicious intromission; encouraging and enabling to a
 " measure of confident application, and taking home all to
 " ourselves, freely, without money, and without price.

Ther. The true belief, is so refined and exalted a virtue, that I very much question, whether I shall ever be able to attain it.

Asp. The true belief is never to be considered, in the light you mention. Not as a refined and exalted virtue; but as a receiving of those benefits, which, received and enjoyed, are the source of all virtuous and godly affections. When, proceeding upon the divine grant, you behold CHRIST as your righteousness and strength, then you truly believe. You believe that truth, which can never disappoint nor fail. You receive that gift, which enriches with graces, and entitles to glory.

Ther. Is not your definition of faith very refined and exalted?

Asp. Give me leave to inquire, how you became acquainted with my definition of faith?

Ther. I am not so inattentive a reader of your letters, as to forget your account of this momentous point. " Faith,
 " you say, is a real persuasion warranted by GOD's word,
 " that the blessed JESUS has shed his blood for my sins;
 " has fulfilled all righteousness in *my stead*; and obtained
 " eternal redemption *for me*.

Asp. Where is the extraordinary refinement of all this? Nothing can be more plain; more simple; or better suited to the meanest capacity.—Where is the unsurmountable difficulty of all this? to believe such things, is not work or labour, but rest and peace. It is nothing more than crediting a report.

A report, made by infinite veracity, for men to believe. A report, made by infinite goodness, for sinful men to believe. Were not our minds strangely prejudiced, and unaccountably darkened, nothing would appear more becoming and reasonable ; nothing would prove more practicable and delightful.

Ther. Does faith then amount to a persuasion ?

Asp. The apostle, describing the faith of the ancient saints, declares ; they saw the promises afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them. They saw the promises of salvation by a REDEEMER to come ; this implies a knowledge of them—they were *persuaded* ; this implies a conviction of their certain truth—they *embraced* * them ; this denotes an application of all to themselves.—And these things were written for our example ; that we should go and embrace them likewise.

The same apostle, enlarging on the faith of *Abraham*, adds ; *being fully persuaded, that what GOD had promised, he was able also to perform* † Here, you see, is *persuasion*, full persuasion—first, of GOD's will, because he had promised ; then, of his power to accomplish his word, even though natural impossibilities stood in the way. In this twofold persuasion, the faith of our father *Abraham* consisted. And we are called to tread in the steps of his faith : consequently, to be persuaded of GOD's will to save us, from sin and hell ; of his power to save us by the blood and righteousness of his SON.

Ther. Is faith, christian faith, a persuasion that all these blessings are for *me* ? does it imply a special application of the benefits to a man's own self ?

Asp. Don't you wish, that it may imply and comprehend all this ? is it not infinitely desirable ? will it not be inexpressibly comfortable ? if it really was matter of doubtful disputation, methinks, we should long to have it ascertained and established. But, blessed be the divine compassion it is as little to be doubted, as it is earnestly to be desired.

* Heb. xi. 13.

† Rom. iv. 21.

Hear what a very valuable writer delivers on this subject. Exhorting to believe on the *LORD JESUS*, he thus explains his meaning; “that is, be verily persuaded in your heart, that *JESUS CHRIST* is yours, and that you shall have life and salvation by him; that whatsoever *CHRIST* did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for you.”

If this writer’s opinion has not weight enough to incline the scale, hear our own Church. You once apprehended, that my attachment to the Church of *England* was unsettled and wavering. Judge now, who has most thoroughly imbibed her doctrines, and is most invariably tenacious of her true interests.—The first part of the homily concerning the sacrament, addresses each reader in particular, and gives him this definition of faith. “It is a belief, not only that the death of *CHRIST* is available, for the remission of sins, and reconciliation with *GOD*; but also that he made a full and sufficient sacrifice *for thee*, a perfect cleansing for thy *sins*”.

If you acquiesce not in either of these determinations, hear an infallible umpire. *I live*, says the Apostle *Paul*, *by faith in the SON of GOD*; or, to express myself in a more clear and determinate manner, I live by a firm persuasion, that *he loved me, and gave himself for me*. This pacifies my conscience. This is the source of my joy, and the motive to my obedience. In short; this is the principle of my whole spiritual life.

My notion of faith, you see, is not without a precedent. It is undeniably the voice of our establishment; it is apparently the sense of scripture; and it gives us a *clear intelligible* idea, suited to the most common acceptance of the word. Such as would naturally arise in the mind of a stranger, who, without any bias on his judgment, should inquire into the purport of our religion, or consider the language of our bible.

Ther. How suited to the most *common acceptance* of the word?

Asp. When you sent a message to your tenant—who, in his last sickness, expressed so much uneasiness on account of his numerous family, and embarrassed circumstances—

assuring him, that you had canceled the bond, and forgiven his debt. When you told the poor woman—whose husband fell from the loaded waggon, and broke both his legs that you would order a surgeon to attend him, and would continue his weekly pay. *How* did they regard, *how* receive your promised kindness? so let us credit the gracious declarations of our, GOD; so receive the joyful report of his gospel? and then we shall answer the import of the word *faith*—then we shall truly *believe*.

Ther. Where have we, in scripture, any thing parallel or similar to these instances?

Asp. Have you never read the words of *Micah*; *who is a GOD like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by transgression**? here is the gracious declaration—he will turn again; he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities†. Here is the joyful report.—And why my friend, why should we pay less credit to the ever-living JEHOVAH, than to a man “whose breath is in his nostrils?” is there treachery with the HOLY ONE of Israel? does the LORD make, and then violate his promise?

Ther. GOD has never violated his promise, when it was expressly made, and particularly applied. But, in this circumstance, there is a wide difference between the case of your friend and the case of his poor people. I named the object of my compassion, in one of the instances; and made a *personal* application, in the other. Neither of which is done in the scriptures.—I don’t find it any where revealed in the bible, that CHRIST shed his blood *for me* in particular. Neither have I read, in the old testament or the new, that the LORD JESUS fulfilled all righteousness *for Theron*. Therefore I cannot see, what ground I have to believe this proposition, from any scriptural authority.

Asp. But my friend, it is revealed and you have read, that the LORD JESUS shed his blood for sinners. And are you excluded from the benefit? when an act of indemnity is published, even the greatest transgressors, the ring-

* Mic. vii. 18.

† Mic. vii. 19.

leaders in the rebellion, have nothing else to do, but only to enquire, whether *they* are *excepted*. They are not to expect, that their names should be mentioned, as the particular objects of their sovereign's favour. It is sufficient, abundantly sufficient, if they are not particularly disclaimed. If this is not done, they may, they ought, they do, most confidently claim the royal clemency in behalf of themselves. So ought you and I to act, in the important case under consideration.

Farther; you are not unacquainted with the history of the three children, condemned by *Nebuchadnezzar* to the burning fiery furnace. You have read, in the old testament, an account of *their* faith; and you find it proposed, in the new testament, as a model for *ours*—let us then consider, what their faith was. Did they say within themselves? “GOD is able, ’tis true, and willing to deliver his servants. “This is affirmed in the books of *Moses* and the prophets. “But we nowhere find it is asserted, that he is willing to “deliver *us*; to deliver *Shadrach, Meshec, and Abednego* “from this horrible death.”—Not such their method of arguing. On the contrary; they assured themselves, that what the LORD had promised to his servants in general, he would make good to them in particular. Hear their own words. They are worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance. *Our GOD, whome we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O King.* This was their profession. This their confidence.—Since we are called to an imitation of their faith, ought not such to be the language of our souls? “our REDEEMER, in whom we trust, *is able* to save us “to the utmost; and he will save us, from thy guilt, O “sin; from thy malice, O satan.”

Ther. Still, if I am not named, methinks, I should be pointed out, by some distinguishing circumstances. This is the way of scripture. Antiochus, the persecutor of the *Jews*, is not indeed named by the prophet *Daniel*. But he is painted in such very significant colours, as most evidently declare, for whom the picture was drawn. It is not expressly said, either in the second epistle to the Thessalonians, or in the whole book of the Revelation, that the Po-

pish faction is Antichrist. But it has so many of his features, that (as a judicious person said) if an hue and cry was made for the latter, I should, without any scruple, apprehend the former.

Asp. Will this content you? will this be sufficient to persuade you? then it is very fully and very exactly done.—When the grace of GOD is revealed, the objects of this ineffable goodness are characterized; and I am beyond measure mistaken, if you do not find yourself in the number.

They are described by their family, their *disposition*, their *practice*.—What says eternal wisdom, when she makes a tender of her inestimable blessings? *To you, O men*, not to fallen Angels, *I call*; and my voice is, not to this man or that man exclusively, but *to the sons of men* indefinitely*. Pray, have you no relation to this family?—What says the holy Apostle, when he publishes the unalterable counsels of heaven? *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that CHRIST JESUS came into the world to save the upright*? The unblameable? Was this the case, our hopes would be covered with a cloud; or rather, totally and finally eclipsed. But see! they are clear as the light, and conspicuous as the noon-day. For he came (cheering, charming word!) He came to save *sinners*†. Cannot you discern your name in this list? I am sure, I can see mine written, as it were, in capitals.

Consonant to all which, is the declaration of another sacred envoy. Who speaking of his celestial MASTER, says; *he suffered*—the PRINCE of peace, the MONARCH of the universe, *suffered*—for whom? They, in whose behalf this matchless ransom was paid, must have an undeniable right, to look upon redemption as their own. And blessed, for ever blessed be GOD, it is most peremptorily said, he suffered for the unjust‡.—Now can you say, that you are not comprehended in this, or the preceding descripti-

* Prov. viii. 4. † 1 Tim. i. 15.

‡ 1 Pet. iii. 18.

ons? Do they not resemble and represent *Theron, as face answers to face in the water?*

Theron. This I cannot deny. This is certainly true.

Asp. That no part of our character might be omitted, and no sort of our misery pass unrelieved, it is further declared, *when we were without strength, CHRIST died for the ungodly* *. When we were ungodly, and considered only as ungodly creatures; neither possessed of any thing amiable, nor having the least ability to require it; nay when we were chargeable with blood guilt, and incapable of expiating a single offence, even then, CHRIST died, and for such a blood as ours he died.

To sum up the whole evidence. Are we not of the *human* family? Are we not, in our spirit and behaviour, *sinners*? Have we not been *unjust* † towards our fellow-creatures, and *ungodly* towards our great CREATOR? Are we not, in all these respects, *without strength*, to recover ourselves, or make any satisfaction for our transgressions?—If we are (and upon these questions, incredulity itself will scarcely demur) let us not forwardly reject, rather let us thankfully receive, those spiritual treasures; which, by virtue of the afore-cited conveyance, are made over to *such* people. Which, by several other clauses in the will and testament of our crucified LORD, evidently devolve to such persons.

Ther. Is it possible, *Aspasio*? Can we be warranted and encouraged to receive these treasures, in a capacity and under a denomination, which I should think more likely to exclude us; disinherit us; and overthrow all our pretensions?

Asp. This may seem strange, but it is true. All the blessings of the gospel proceed upon a supposition of sinfulness. CHRIST is made wisdom unto his people; but what occasion for the accession of wisdom, unless it be in the case of ignorance and folly? CHRIST is made righte-

* Rom. v. 6.

† He is unjust towards his neighbour, who neglects to love his neighbour as himself, &c. And if this is the standard, who has not taken short?

ousness ; but who can stand in need of a justifying righteousness, if they are not in themselves unprofitable and guilty ? CHRIST is made sanctification ; and does not this imply a state of corruption to be remedied, a body of sin to be destroyed ? CHRIST is made *redemption* ; and from what are persons redeemed, but from chains and bondage, from misery and ruin, from all manner of evil ?

It is also a most precious and invaluable truth. Such as I would hold fast, and never, never let go. When I search for my own endowments, I find nothing that I have venture to plead. Being, in my best moments, and amidst my choicest duties, a sinner. As this is, at all times, my undoubted character, I have at all times, an undoubted warrant to say, the uncreated WISDOM calleth me : the blessed JESUS came to save me : the great MESSIAH suffered death *for me*.

Let me illustrate the point.—*Romulus* you know, the founder of the *Roman* empire, was a poor Prince : had but a handful of Subjects, and very scanty territories. What expedient could he devise, to enlarge the boundaries of the one, and augment the number of the other ? He issued a proclamation addressed to outlaws and criminals ; all that were involved in debt, or obnoxious to punishment. Promising, that as many as would settle under his dominion, should be secured from prosecution, and vested with considerable privileges.—We will suppose a person in those distressed circumstances. Upon hearing the welcome invitation, he hangs down his head, and with a dejected air, cries ; “ I am a debtor, I am a criminal, and therefore unworthy of the royal protection.” What answer should be made to such a dispirited complainer ? Make the same to yourself, whenever you are inclined to renew the present objections.—Remembering, that the infinite and eternal SOVEREIGN, to display the magnificence of his majesty, and manifest the riches of his goodness, has commissioned his Ambassadors to publish in every nation under heaven— “ that all unhappy sinners, who are oppressed by the devil and liable to damnation, may come to CHRIST. May they look upon CHRIST as their ransom and righteousness. May, in this manner, obtain pardon, justification, and all the privileges of children.”

Ther. At this rate, the *vilest miscreants* have as clear, nay have the very same warrant to believe in CHRIST, and receive his salvation, as the highest saints.

Asp. The very same. In this respect there is no difference. All have sinned, and must sue for spiritual blessings, not as deserving, but as guilty creatures; must receive them, not as the recompence of their own worth, but as the issues of infinite mercy.

The promise is express and unlimited, *whosoever* believeth in CHRIST, shall not be ashamed. Here is no pre-eminence of the *Jew* above the *Greek*. No precedence given to the man of decency and sobriety, before the shameless and abandoned profligate.—This is farther confirmed by undoubted fact. St. Peter, speaking of the vilest miscreants, says; “GOD gave them the HOLY GHOST, “even as he did unto us; and put no difference between “us and them*.” They were altogether as welcome to CHRIST and his salvation, as we the Apostles of the LORD.

Should you ask the highest saints, on what their hopes are grounded? This, or something to this effect, would be their reply—“on the grant of CHRIST and his salvation, “most clearly set forth, in the scriptures of truth. There “we hear it declared; *unto you*, though Gentiles and idolaters, is preached the remission of sins†. As a blessing “procured by CHRIST, and now presented to your souls, “on the same terms as light is presented to your eyes. There “we see it recorded; *this man receiveth sinners*‡.—Yes; “he, who is GOD and man in one CHRIST, openeth his “arms; openeth his heart; and receiveth sinners, to a participation of himself and his heavenly riches. Receiveth “those sinners, who were not only the scorn of pharisaical “pride, but the very disgrace of human nature.—There we “read the following decree, issued from the court of hea-

I I

* Acts xv. 2. 9.

† Acts xiii. 38.

‡ Luke xv. 2.

“ven, and registered for the comfort of a guilty world.--
 “The promise, relating to forgiveness of sins and the SPI-
 “RIT of grace, is *to you*. Though you have persecuted
 “and murdered the *LORD JESUS*, you may, without
 “any scruple or delay, apply to yourselves. Nay more;
 “you may carry it home to your children, and bid them be
 “sharers of the blessing. It is an unsearchable treasure,
 “which you may freely enjoy; and an inestimable portion,
 “which they may as freely inherit. What is more graci-
 “ous still; it is *to all that are afar off*: whether literally
 “afar off, by living in remote Heathen climes; or spiritu-
 “ally afar off, by deeply revolting from their duty. In
 “short: it is *to as many as the LORD our GOD*, by the
 “preaching of his most blessed gospel, *shall call**.”

Ther. This is a pleasing supposition. But it would be more satisfactory, if you should refer me to any of the saints, actually speaking in this manner?

=====

* Acts ii. 38. It has been objected, that the passage, produced by Alpasio, does not exactly suit his purpose. Because, the people, to whom the Apostle speaks, were not the congregation in general, but those particular hearers, who were pricked in the heart: this is, were endued with godly sorrow, and savingly changed.

To which I reply, by putting a query upon the objection, and lodging a caveat against the interpretation. First for the objection, ‘the people, to whom the Apostle speaks,’ were not the congregation in general, but those particular hearers, who were pricked in their hearts. Does the Apostle address himself to those only? I think not. I hope not. Because this would represent the gifts of GOD, as depending on human qualifications in man. Consequently, would destroy the freeness of the gift, and eclipse the glory of grace. Whereas if we suppose the promise addressed to sinners, as sinners, without any thing, to distinguish one from another, then, it is perfectly free and grace shines forth in it in full lustre.--The promise is extended to the whole audience, every one of you. To the children, the children that were at home, their children that were born: their children of the latest generation. And their picture, could neither be pricked in their hearts, or savingly changed.--Besides, it seems plain, from the course of the narrative, that the address is directed to any select number but to the promiscuous multitude. For, the discriminating sentence follows in verse 38. Then they, among this promiscuous multitude, that gladly received his word, were baptized.

Where pricked in the heart, it is as if they were endued with godly sorrow, and savingly changed. As, in this instance, I am to lodge a caveat.--Cain, and Saul, and Judas, were pricked in heart. They had stings of anguish in their consciences, and the disease of guilt in their souls. Yet none ever imagined, that they were truly converted. These people were ignorant of CHRIST and the way of salvation. What shall we do? Doubtless, if we want of this necessary knowledge. They did not so much as tie the place of sin; therefore, could not be arrived at it. Could not be safe, or savingly changed.--I must not ply arguments. The Apostle must certainly be the best judge of his hearers; and the best expounder of his own words. Did he consider this circumstance in his address, as constituting the grace of repentance, or pardon from the promised gift of the HOLY GHOST? it was not faith in CHRIST for the remission of sins neither was it a pledge of security from the wrath which was coming on the iniquitous generation. This is evident from his own words.--repentance for

Asp. *Isaiah*, you will allow, was a saint of no inferior rank. Yet he breaths the spirit I am describing, and acts the part I am vindicating. Turn to that epitome of the gospel, his *fifty-third* chapter. There you may observe him, claiming a share in the greatest of all privileges, salvation through the blood of CHRIST. How does he advance and maintain his claim? Not in the capacity of a *sanctified* but under the character of a *sinful* person. These are his words; *the LORD hath laid on him, on his son CHRIST JESUS, the iniquity of us all*†. Of me, and of my brethren in piety, does he mean? No; but of me, and of my fellow-transgressors. This is evidently implied in the cause I have quoted. In the preceding part of the verse, the prophet explains himself, and leaves no room for hesitation, “All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned “every one to his own ways.” Yet *our* transgressions, *our* iniquities, the GOD of all mercy has transferred from us, and charged upon his beloved SON.—As the vilest miscreants are indispensibly obliged to confess the former, they have an apparent right to profess, to assert, and to believe the latter.

Ther. The vilest miscreants have a *right*—an *apparent* right to believe—to believe that all *their* sins are laid upon CHRIST! This is surprising doctrine. I know not how to credit it, though you take so much pains to establish it.

Asp. It puts me in mind of that memorable prediction, recorded by *Habakkuk*, and quoted by *Peter*. *Behold! I work a work*, of such immensely rich and inconceivably free goodness, *that you shall not believe, even though a man declare it unto you*.—The LORD, I trust, who opened

the remission—ye shall receive—save yourselves. A way of speaking, which supposes those, whom he addresses, to be destitute of the blessings mentioned.

This, if I mistake not, is the truth of the case. Those people, convinced of their horrible wickedness in crucifying the SON of GOD, were filled with the most alarming apprehensions. As yet, they had no notion of a divine REDEMPTION, dying for his very murderers. They were, therefore, under what some writers call, a law-work. And can the law, which worketh wrath, produce a saving change, or rather the change which accompanieth salvation? This would take away the labors of CHRIST, and transfer them to Moses. This would confound the letter which killeth, with the spirit that giveth life.

Her eyes, to discern the fountain of water, for the refreshment of her son, will open my friends eyes, to discern this infinitely more precious fountain, for the consolation of his soul.

O the riches, the unsearchable riches of the kindness and love of GOD! He makes a grant of CHRIST and his heavenly kingdom, to the most contemptible wretches on the face of the earth; yea, to the most despicable creatures on this side hell!—At this you wonder. At this we ought all to wonder this will be the wonder of saints and angels, through a boundless eternity. Yet though we wonder, let us not gainsay nor murmur. Let not the creature refuse the bounty of the CREATOR, because it is unutterably great. Neither let the elder brother repine, because the young prodigal enters at the same door, and is admitted to the same table with himself.

I have alledged the testimony of the saints, let me add the decision of their king. *GOD* so loved the world, even that world, which, the Apostle *John* assures us, is not only fallen but lieth in wickedness. Yet, fallen and apostate as it is, *GOD* so loved it, that he gave his only begotten SON, to bring in a perfect righteousness, and obtain eternal redemption.

Ther. But the question is, for whom?

Asp. For the world most certainly. None else. Nothing else, is mentioned. It is not said, for the choicest part of the world; its best inhabitants, picked and culled from the refuse. But for the corrupt and vicious world, these things are given. That, being believed and accepted, they may be saving health to their souls.

Ther. "For the world *,"—Does this general form of expression warrant any one, to make a particular application of CHRIST and all his benefits, to himself?

Asp. Pray do you find any restriction of the grant? Is any exception made, relating to this or that particular set of men? Is not the extent of the gift as wide as the world?

* John vi. 51.

If so, it warrants any one, it authorizes every one*, to make a special application of CHRIST to himself.

In other instances, such a general expression not only warrants, but produces a particular application. When *Jonah*, in pursuance of the divine command, *cried and said; ye' forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown*. Here was no particular mention of man, woman, or child. Neither the King, nor the nobles, nor the commons were specified. Much less was each and every inhabitant threatened by name. Nevertheless, this general denunciation alarmed them all; was influential on them all. Inasmuch that *the people of Nineveh believed GOD, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least †*. They believed; hence we learn the true nature of believing. "GOD speaks to me; and what he speaks, he will perform;" is its genuine profession. Hence he likewise discover, *who* they are which ought, in this manner, to apply the general word; "all, from the least even unto the greatest.

Ther. The case is not parallel, *Aspasio*. This was a denunciation of vengeance, not a promise of grace.

Asp. And can you *Theron*, can you, suppose? That God is more liberal of vengeance, than he is communicative of grace. Vengeance is his strange work, but in mercy and loving-kindness he delighteth.—Are bound to believe and apply his dreadful threatenings? Not allowed to believe and apply his precious promises? Surely, the LORD's ways are not so unequal.—When the law says, *cursed is every one, that continueth not in all things ‡*; should not every hearer take this to himself, and submit to the sentence of just condemnation? When the gospel says, *He came to that which is lost §*; should not every hearer take this also to himself, and embrace the tender of free salvation?

However, if you dislike this instance, I will give you another; which is not of the vindictive, but of the benefi-

* If there were any man, to whom the grant of a SAVIOUR did not particularly belong; that person would have no warrant to believe; he would do right in disbelieving, what the scriptures represent as the greatest sin, would become his bounden duty.

† *Jonah* iii. 5.

‡ *Gal.* iii. 10.

§ *Matt.* xviii. 11.

cent kind.—When the *Manna* made its first appearance in the wilderness ; when the *Israelites* knew, neither what it was, nor for whom intended ; both these particulars were explained by *Moses*. *This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat* *. No mention is made of any individual person. Yet the whole congregation, looked upon this as an undoubted permission, but for themselves and their children, to gather, to fetch home, and to use the miraculous food

Ther. GOD gave the *Manna* to all the *Israelites*, both good and bad. But does he give *CHRIST* with his unlimited freeness ?

Asp. Our LORD himself, alluding to this very miracle, vouchsafes you an answer. My FATHER giveth you the true bread from heaven †. The language is nearly the same as *Moses* used ; and it expresses the very same unlimited freeness.—My FATHER giveth you his incarnate SON, and his divinely excellent righteousness. These are bread indeed ; bread, which came down from the regions of heaven ; and bread, which nourisheth the soul for the joys of heaven.—This my FATHER giveth you ; though not in actual possession, yet in right to possess. Thus he giveth you ‡, by way of free indefinite grant. Without which, any attempt to possess, even in the most upright of men would be illegal and presumptuous. By virtue of which grant, the bad as well as the good—it is your own expression, and therefore I make use of it. Though, in reality none are good, till they receive *CHRIST*. Which, were his benefits of the exclusive sort, would be cause of infinite anxiety to mankind. But our great consolation is, that one as well as another, the idolatrous Gentile as well as the professing Israelite, has an unquestionable warrant to claim them for himself.

* *Exod.* xvi. 15.

† *John* vi. 32.

‡ “ The receiving of *CHRIST* necessarily presupposes the giving of him. There may indeed be a giving, where there is no receiving, for a gift may be refused. There may also be a taking, where there is no giving ; which is a presumptuous act on, without warrant. But there can be no place for receiving *CHRIST*, where there is not a giving of him before.” *Bolton's Notes*.

Ther. Unquestionable! Is not this expression too peremptory? That such a grant should be made to believers, I can easily conceive. But is it made to sinners, to any sinners, to the most abandoned sinners?

Asp. Yes, Theron, to sinners. And when sinners receive the grant, then they commence believers. Only, no man living would inherit the blessing. Because all men are, by the depravity and impotence of their nature, originally concluded under sin and unbelief. It is therefore a source of comfort and a store-house of relief, for the most guilty creatures, even in their most desperate circumstances.

What said our LORD JESUS? My father giveth you; that is, the people who stood around, and heard his gracious voice. Many of whom were in a carnal state habitually, and even then were in a murmuring wicked frame*. What says his prophet? He cries out in a rapture; O my lost brethren, *to us a child is born; to us a son is given!*—Not to us, who were regenerate, and become children of light. But to us children of fallen Adam; to us undone sinners of mankind; who *walked in darkness, and dwelt in the shadow of death* †.—What saith GOD the LORD? He that created the heavens, and stretched them out? *I will give thee*, meaning his beloved SON, *for a covenant*; it is not said, of believers, but *of the people*; it is not said, of new creatures, but *of the Gentiles*: who were the vilest of all creatures, or, as you have properly spoke, the most abandoned sinners.

That we may understand more clearly the signification of these terms, and see the true extent of this gift, it is added; *I will give thee to open the blind eyes, and to bring out the prisoners from the prison* ‡. Miserable and guilty wretches, blinded by the devil, and enslaved to their lusts; these are not set aside. Nay; these are expressly named. They are the very *Patentees* in the heavenly grant. An obedient and a dying SAVIOUR is as much given to them; that they may receive him, and be saved; as the city of refuge was

* John vi. 26. 41.

† Isaiah li, 2. 7.

‡ Isaiah xli. 6. 7.

appointed for the manslayer, that he might fly thither, and be secure; or as the brazen serpent was lifted up on a pole, that the wounded Israelite might look to it, and be healed.

Here then the grant and the gift are mentioned; the persons to whom the grant is made, and for whom the gift is provided, are specified. They are sinners; *blinded* and enslaved sinners; or, if there be any other more obnoxious sort, they are all comprehended in this one word, *Gentiles*. Only allow the divine speaker to be sincere; then we shall see, in these precious texts, a most clearing hope even for the vilest sinners. Hope, that they may be justified, escape the curse, and find favour with GOD. Nay; we may boldly affirm; that, proceeding on these works of the eternal KING, even the vilest sinner is allowed, is authorized to say; "GOD gives me his SON, to be my covenant surety. I take him at his word. The SURETY and all his merits, and all his benefits, are mine."

Divinely rich bounty! Enough to charm and astonish the universe. But not too great for the infinite JEHOVAH to exercise. O, let us not refuse what, on this consideration, the unerring SPIRIT calls *our own mercy* †.—Let us adore the beneficence of our GOD. Let us believe his promising word. And, in this sweet, this easy manner, obtain both present and final salvation.

Ther. I have one scruple more, which, at this instant, arises in my mind. The righteousness of CHRIST, according to the Apostle, *is upon all that believe*. Therefore, it is not the sinners, but the believer's portion.

Asp. If this was true, sure the gospel, which reveals this righteousness, could not be glad tidings. I will suppose a congregation of ignorant and ungodly people, of heathens and idolators. The minister lifts his voice and cries; "the righteousness of GOD the SAVIOUR is not for you. You are not believers, and therefore have no right to receive the blessing."—What a discouraging, nay, what a killing message!—Whereas, if the Ambassador of CHRIST

† John 11. 8.

makes this proclamation ; “ I know, you are an assembly
“ of vile and abominable sinners. Nevertheless, I am com-
“ missioned to preach glad tidings to you. The infinitely
“ gracious FATHER freely offers his perfect righteousness
“ to you.” This is indeed a joyful sound.

Besides, *Theron*, you don’t attend to the apostle’s expres-
sion. He says, the righteousness of GOD *is upon* all them
that believe. Such persons actually possess it. They wear
the robe. They are clothed with salvation. And here
lies the difference between the vile miscreant and the real
saint. Not that one was originally better than the other :
not that one has a clearer grant of CHRIST than the other :
but the latter has put on the wedding-garment, and uses it
to his unspeakable honor and happiness ; the former is ad-
monished to throw aside his filthy rags ; and invited to put
on this heavenly raiment.

Ther. Let me recollect—CHRIST is given for the world,
the apostate world, to believe on—CHRIST has died, not
for the righteous, but for the ungodly—CHRIST came in
the flesh to save sinners, even the chief of sinners.—Well,
Aspasio, if these things are true (and how can they be
otherwise ? since they are the express doctrine of scripture)
it is a pity, but they were more generally known. For my
part, I must confess, they are not only new, but strange to
me. Though I have read them in the bible, yet when I
come to consider them, and compare them with what pas-
ses in my breast, I find they are quite contrary to my usual
way of thinking.

Asp. You remind me of a valuable person, whom I once
numbered among my acquaintance, and whose way of
thinking somewhat resembled your own. Will you give
me leave to relate his case ?

Ther. Most gladly. It will be some kind of consolation
to hear, that others have laboured under the same difficul-
ties with myself, and been subject to the same distresses.—
If I am informed of their *deliverance* from those distresses,
it will be like shewing me an opened door, for effecting my
own escape. If I am likewise acquainted with the *man-*

ner of their deliverance, this will furnish me with a clue to guide my steps.

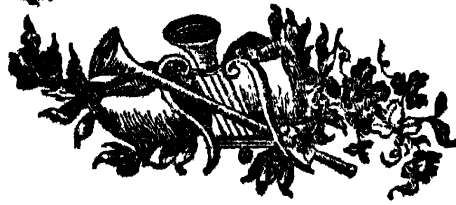
Asp. This person was roused from a habit of indolence and supineness, into a serious concern for his eternal welfare. Convinced of his depraved nature and aggravated guilt, he had recourse to the scriptures, and to frequent prayer. He attended the ordinances of christianity, and sought earnestly for an *assured interest* in CHRIST. But found no stedfast faith, and tasted very little comfort. At length, he applied to an eminent divine, and laid open the state of his heart. Short, but weighty, was the answer he received. "I perceive, Sir, the cause of all your distress. You do not, you will not, come to CHRIST *as a sinner*. This mistake stands between your soul and the joy of religion. This detains you in the gall of bitterness; and take heed, O! take heed, lest it consign you over to the bond of iniquity." This admonition never departed from the Gentleman's mind; and it became a happy means of removing the obstructions to his peace.

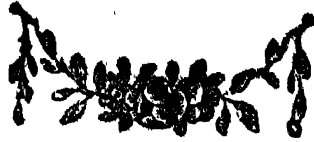
Remember this little history, Theron; and may it prove as efficacious for your good, as it is pertinent to your circumstances! I would also have you remember, that the free grant of JESUS CHRIST, which is made in the word of truth, and addressed to sinners of mankind, is the only basis and ground-work of faith. An Apostle after all the labours of his exemplary life, can have no better. And a Magdalene or a Manasseh, as a motive and encouragement for their turning to the LORD, have the very same.

But we greatly digress from the principal and most momentous subject.—Since you so much disapprove of my account of faith, I must intreat of you to favor me with a description, more correct, and unexceptionable. For, as you justly observed, this is a very momentous article.

Is not JESUS CHRIST then the source of all spiritual good, and faith the main channel of conveyance? Surely then it should be made and also kept, as clear as possible—Is not JESUS CHRIST the foundation

of all true godliness, and faith the master-arch in this sacred structure? Surely then it should be raised and turned with the utmost care.





DIALOGUE XVII.

—♦♦♦—

THERON.

PALÆMON's account is this—*Faith*, he says, is a firm persuasion, that JESUS CHRIST has shed his blood, and fulfilled all righteousness ; has sustained the punishment due to sin, and obtained full reconciliation with GOD. That all this grace, and each of these benefits, are free, perfectly free ; for you, for me, for others. In consequence of this persuasion, the sinner flies to CHRIST, comes to CHRIST, and trusts in CHRIST for his own salvation.

Asp. I have the highest regard for *Palæmon's* judgement ; and I cannot but think, my opinion is confirmed even by his.—The act of *flying* to CHRIST, implies an intention to get out of danger ; it implies a discovery of CHRIST, as the appointed safety ; and consists in making use of him as such. When the manslayer fled to the city of refuge, he made use of that privileged place for his own protection. How can this be done, with regard to a bleeding, dying SAVIOUR, but only by a persuasion that he *is mine* ? That his sufferings were in *my* stead, and that his death is my safe-guard.—What is meant by *coming* to CHRIST, we may learn from *Jeremiah*. *Behold ! we come unto thee, for thou art the LORD our GOD.* Coming, you see, includes or proceeds upon a real persuasion, that the LORD is *our* GOD. While we are wholly destitute of this persuasion, we stand at a distance, and our souls are afar off. We are never brought nigh ; we never come in the prophet's sense ; till we are taught to say, each one for himself, *thou art the*

LORD my GOD. *.—The act of *trusting* in CHRIST is much of the same nature. It presupposes, that CHRIST is the trustee of the covenant of grace; it proceeds upon a conviction of his faithfulness in executing the office; and it is a solemn surrendering or giving up the whole affair of our salvation into his hand. Giving it up, not in uncertainty of success (this would be *mistrusting*, rather than *trusting*) but with a certainty, in some measure, suitable to the fidelity and ability of HIM, with whom we have to do.

If you still are doubtful, whether any such persuasion is implied in *trusting*, let us choose a referee. Let us carry our controversy to the King of *Israel*. Inquire of *David*, why he trusts in the LORD, and what he means by *trusting*? To both these enquiries he answers distinctly and fully. “*The LORD is my high tower, my shield, and he in whom I trust* †. He is a shield—He is *my* shield—Of this I am persuaded, and *therefore* I trust in him: or this I believe, and in *so doing*, I trust on him.”

Ther. This air of *assurance*, which runs through all your representations of faith, appears somewhat presumptuous in my eye. It is as if people pretended to know and claim their seat in heaven, before the judgment day.

* Jer. iii. 22. This text relates to the backsliding *Israelites*. It is observable, that they do not lay claim to the LORD as their GOD, because they are penitents. But are encouraged to return, from the bare relief of his gracious declarations. The return of the children of GOD, after backsliding, is of the same nature, and proceeds upon the same grounds, as their first approach. According to that invariable rule, “as you have received CHRIST JESUS the LORD, so walk ye in him.”

This doctrine is taught, and represented under the same image, *Isa.* xlv. 24. “*To HIM shall men come.*” What does this figurative expression signify? The prophet himself answers our question, and explains his own meaning. *Surely, shall one say, in the LORD, have I righteousness.* When people believe this in their heart, and profess this with their mouth, then they come unto the LORD,

† *Psal.* cxliv. 2: See also *Psal.* xxvi. 14. *Isa.* xli. 2. and especially *2 Kings* xviii. 30. Where *Rabshakeh*, the *Assyrian* General, gives us an exposition of the word *trust*. This man, unacquainted with theological controversies and nice distinctions; having no other information, but what was derived from common sense, and the common principles of mankind, sees all that we contend for, comprehended in the expression, *let not Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, the LORD will freely deliver us.* To trust in the LORD, is, according to this abominable sapiens, to say from the heart, and declare with the mouth the LORD will deliver—he will deliver us—he will surely deliver us.—Must it not be a shame to christians, if they have meaner apprehensions of trusting in JEHOVAH, than a heathen and an idolater.

Asp. And is this so strange or presumptuous a thing ? In former ages, people made no scruple to declare ; *We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of GOD, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* And these are people, whom you need not blush to be like, nor be afraid to copy after.

The *Papists*, I own, take great offence at the word assurance, and utterly explode the doctrine*. But they are no infallible guides, for us to follow ; neither are they very inviting patterns, for us to imitate. You and I, *Theron*, cannot reasonably be offended, at the expression, or the doctrine ; if we recollect what we have been taught, in the first stage of life, and what is professed, in the last scene of mortality. We are taught even from our infancy, that the sacrament of the LORD's supper, is not only a sign of spiritual grace, but a pledge to *assure* us thereof†. At the interment of the dead, we profess our *sure* and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life‡. That this is always applied, with due propriety, in our burial-service, I will not venture to assert. That it sufficiently countenances my sentiments, none will undertake to deny. If this countenances, the Apostle authorizes them ; when he addresses us, with this very remarkable exhortation ; *having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of JESUS, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith*§ with a firm persuasion of acceptance ; with a certain expectation of success.

After all, if you dislike the word assurance, we will change it for the more softened, and more modestly-sounding term, appropriation.—“ Faith, he tells us, is a work of

* One of their unrighteous decrees, established by the council of Trent, is : “ If any shall say, that justifying faith is nothing else, but a confidence or assurance of the mercy of GOD, pardoning sins for *CHRIST*'s sake, let him be accursed ”.—Must we not call the assembly, which could pass such horrible doctrine into a law, the Synagogue of Satan ? Ought we not to expostulate, with such a dogmatizing and damning spirit, in the words of the Apostle ? “ O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the LORD ? Acts xiii. 10.

† Church Catechism.

‡ Burial Office.

§ Heb x. 19, 22.

“ the HOLY GHOST in the soul, enabling it to appropriate the blood and righteousness of JESUS CHRIST, for the remission of sin, and its justification unto eternal life.”

Ther. You change assurance for a more softened, not for a more intelligible term. I must desire to know, what you mean by the word appropriation.

Asp. To appropriate, in the theological sense, is to take home the grace of GOD ; or apply to one's self, what lies in the common indefinite grant of the gospel. Is CHRIST the treasure hid in the field ? To appropriate this treasure, is to receive and use it as our own portion. Is CHRIST the balm of Gilead, full of saving health ? To appropriate this balm, is to take and apply it for the recovery of our own souls. And without such an appropriation, how can we either be enriched by the former, or healed by the latter ?

Let me farther explain my meaning, and exemplify the position, by considering CHRIST in his several offices.—CHRIST, as a priest, is made to guilty creatures righteousness. When we appropriate the grace of our great HIGH PRIEST, this is the language of our hearts, in the LORD have I righteousness*.—CHRIST, as a prophet, is made to ignorant creatures wisdom. When we appropriate the benefits of our unerring PROPHET, this is the persuasion of our souls, *though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be a light unto me*†.—CHRIST, as a King, is made unto depraved creatures sanctification. When we appropriate the munificence of our Almighty KING, this is our comfortable trust, the Lord will deliver me from every evil work†.

Ther. The scripture never uses the term appropriation. Will it not draw off our attention from the form of sound words, left us by the Apostle ? Will it not lead us into a strife about phrases, devised by human wisdom ? Perhaps, bewilder us among oppositions of science, falsely so called ? Some persons, you must be sensible, have affirmed ; that it

* 1st. xlv. 24.

† Mic. 7, 8.

‡ 2 Tim. iv. 18

is enough to know the truth, and believe what JESUS has done. According to that which is written; *by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.*

Asp. Do you experience this to be enough, Theron? Is this sufficient to dispel your fears, and calm your conscience? Does this comfort your heart, and fill you with all joy?

The scriptural knowledge; that which the HOLY GHOST teaches; is of the appropriating kind. And if the doctrine be contained in scripture, it should seem an over-refined scrupulosity to cavil with the diction.

By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many. That is, by the knowledge of him, as our atonement, and our redemption; *who was wounded for our sins, and bruised for our iniquities.* Thus the prophet expounds his own text; and lends us a clue, that may lead us into our LORD's meaning, when he declares; *this is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true GOD, and JESUS CHRIST whom thou hast sent.* That they may know thee, O GOD, as completely reconciled, and infinitely gracious to them.—That they may know JESUS CHRIST, as the sole cause of this blessed reconciliation; by satisfying justice, and bringing in an everlasting righteousness.

This is consonant to that general maxim, laid down by the Apostle, *we have known and believed*—What? That GOD is love? This is part of the truth, but not the whole.—That he exercises it freely, and with overflowing abundance? Neither does this come up to the measure of the believer's knowledge.—But we have known and believed the special; the distinguishing love, which GOD hath towards us, in JESUS CHRIST.—This is the knowledge, which justifies the ungodly, and sanctifies the sinner. In this knowledge, you see, there is an application to ourselves; a belief that the blessing is our own; or, in other words, an appropriation, towards us.

Ther. So then an application to ourselves, or a belief that the blessings of the gospel are our own, is what you mean by appropriation.

Asp. Add, our own by virtue of the divine grant, and this is my very meaning. That an appropriation of this kind is included in the essence of faith, is the sentiment I would maintain.—Which sentiment might be confirmed, if such confirmation were demanded, by a multitude of the most illustrious witnesses. Witnesses so *illustrious*, that they were a blessing to the world, and an honor to human nature. So *numerous*, that without giving an abstract of their testimonies, it might seem tedious only to recite their names *.

Ther. I will dispense with your recital of their names, only let me have a specimen of their testimonies.

Asp. First, let me present you with Dr. *Owen*; than whom *England* has produced few writers, either more judicious or more devout. “Faith, he tells us in his *Catechism*, is a gracious resting upon the free promises of GOD, in JESUS CHRIST for mercy, with a *firm persuasion* of heart, that GOD is a reconciled father to us in the SON of his love.”

Next, let me introduce an author of renown. From our sister country, *Scotland*. Mr. *Davidson* asking, “What is that faith, which is the only instrument of this strait conjunction between CHRIST crucified and us,?” Teaches his disciple so reply; “It is the *sure persuasion* of the heart, that CHRIST, by his death and resurrection, *hath taken away our sins*; and cloathing us with his own righteousness, has thoroughly restored us to the favor of GOD.”

To these I would add the learned and justly celebrated *Altingius*, professor of divinity at *Heidelberg*. “Faith, he

* If the reader should inquire after their names, he will find some of them enumerated in the following catalogue. Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, Beza, Bullinger, Bucer, Knox, Craig, Melvil, Bruce, Davidson, Forbes, &c. Urbinus, Zanchius, Junius, Piscator, Rollock, Danæus, Wendelinus, Chamierus, Sharpius, Rodius, Pareus, Altingius, Triglandti, (Gibbertus & Jacobus); Arnoldus, Marelius, the four professors at Leyden, Wallæus, Rivetus, Polvander, Thyfius; Wollebius, Heideggerus, Effemius, Turretinus, &c. Many eminent British divines, Bishop Babington, Davenant, Hall; Mr. Perkins, Pemble, Willet, Gouge, Rogers, Burgess, Owen, Marshall, &c.

If we were apparently and demonstrably in an error, yet, to err with such company, and in the footsteps of such guides, must very much tend to mitigate the levity of censure. But, I believe, few serious persons will venture to charge error and delusion upon such a venerable body of protestant divines: so eminent for their learning; so exemplary for their holiness; and whose labours were so remarkably owned by GOD.

“ says, is a knowledge of the grace of GOD in CHRIST, together with a fiduciary reliance on it, or an *application* of it to a man’s *own self*.”

These testimonies are but as the tythe to the whole crop. Yet these are more than enough to exempt me from the charge of singularity. You will not wonder therefore, if I still abide by the good old doctrine, which is espoused by so many of the ablest judges; which was the darling tenet of almost all reformers; and which is the avowed belief, not of a few single persons only, but of many famous protestant churches.

Ther. Pray let me hear, what the protestant churches say. Their testimony, though not infallible, is doubtless very considerable.

Asp The testimony of the English church is already produced. You shall now have the declaration of the church of Scotland. In her national covenant, she has these memorable words; “We detest and refuse the usurped authority of that Roman Antichrist, his *general* and *doubt-some* faith.” From which words we naturally draw these two conclusions—That, since the Popish faith is a doubtful faith, the protestant faith is an assured faith—That since the Popish faith is a general one, the protestant faith must needs be a faith of special application.

Now let us hear the unanimous suffrage of the *Palatinate*. It is enquired, in the twenty-first question of their public Catechism, “What is true faith?” To which this answer is returned. “It is not only an assent to all the truths which GOD has revealed in his word; but it is an *assured* trust, wrought by the HOLY SPIRIT in my heart, that remission of sins, compleat righteousness, and eternal life are given; freely given, not to others only, but to myself; and all this, from the mere mercy of GOD, through the alone merits of CHRIST.”

Omitting the confessions of several other foreign churches, I shall only subjoin the doctrine of the *Dutch* Divines, as it is delivered in their brief compendium of christian religion. *Quest.* What is a sincere faith? *Ans.* “It is a sure knowledge of GOD and his promises, revealed to us in the gospel; and a hearty confidence, that all my sins are forgiven, for CHRIST’s sake.”

With all these testimonies, which are the voice of nations I have the happiness to coincide. Only some of them are much stronger, in displaying and maintaining the special fiducia, or appropriating persuasion.—From this view of things, you will at least allow, that the personal application of CHRIST, and the assured confidence in CHRIST, are not, (as they have very indecently been called) the fiction of a crazy brain—Especially, as I apprehend, the determinations of scripture, and the experience of scriptural saints, are all on our side.

Ther. You have now brought the cause to the proper bar. When a question so important is debated, and an interest so momentous is concerned I cannot acquiesce in any authority less than divine. I cannot, and indeed I think we ought not. Nothing should satisfy us on such an occasion, but the word, which is unerring and decisive; the word by which we are to stand or fall eternally. Whence does it appear, that the determinations of this divine word, are on your side?

Asp. From the noblest description of faith, which language itself can form. The writer to the *Hebrews*, having the life of faith, the perseverance of faith, and the end or reward of faith, proceeds to a definition of this leading grace. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen* *.—The evidence, exhibiting not a faint surmise, but a clear demonstration, both of invisible blessings, and of our right to enjoy them.—The substance realizing what is promised; and giving us, as it were, a possession of good things that are remote, a present possession of good things that are future.

Ther. What are those blessings, and these good things?

Asp. I will inform my Theron, and in such a manner, from such passages, as shall faithfully ascertain my representation of faith.—What says the Apostle of the Gentiles? *I preached unto you the gospel* †.—And what is the substance of this evangelical message? CHRIST died for our sins ‡.

* Heb. xi. 1.

† Cor. xv. 1.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 3.

That so exalted a person as the **SON** of **GOD**, and **LORD** of glory, should die, is wonderful—that he should die for sins, the most abominable objects, and for sinners, the most detestable creatures, is abundantly more wonderful—that he should die, not for sins in general, but for our sins in particular, this is inexpressibly wonderful, and at the same time inexpressibly comfortable—Here we have the gospel in this proposition, **CHRIST** died for sins. Here we have faith and its principal acting, expressed in this proposition, **CHRIST** died for our sins. Till the former is preached, the doctrine is not gospel; till the latter is believed, it should seem from St. Paul's account, the conviction is not faith.

Let me produce another instance, extracted, like the preceding, from the rolls of heaven. This is the record, that **GOD** hath given to us, eternal life *; not proposed it, on I know not what conditions, but have given. Freely and fully; without any reserve; and with a liberality suited to his incomprehensible goodness, he hath given the richest of all gifts; and not to some only, or to others, but to us even to us.

Ther. To us, that is, to the apostles and their fellow-saints. As the epistle was written by an Apostle; it is certainly addressed to men of like mind; to the saints that are upon the earth, and such as excel in virtue.

Asp. True: but was eternal life given to them, because they were Apostles? No, verily; but because **CHRIST** died for them.—Did **CHRIST** die for them, because they excelled in virtue? In no wise; but because they were miserable sinners.—Eternal life was purchased from them, when they were sinners. It was consigned over to them, when they were sinners. And neither the purchase, nor the gift, were founded on their being saints, but aimed at making them so.

That **CHRIST** died for our sins—that **GOD** hath given to us eternal life—these are the blessings, of which faith is the evidence; these the good things, of which faith is the

substance. This is the honey in the evangelical hive: and I am at a loss to conceive, how it is possible to taste the honey, without some appropriation of the good things to ourselves.—This appropriation, if I mistake not, is comprehended in the several figurative descriptions of faith, which occur in holy writ.

Ther. Favour me with some of those descriptions. I begin to see a peculiar beauty, and an unequalled richness, in the figures of scripture. Nothing yields me a more refined pleasure, than to investigate and discover the exact sense of those instructive images. It is somewhat like kindling the consecrated incense: which, when rising in a flame, diffused light, when spreading in clouds of fragrance, distributed refreshment.

Asp. Faith is styled, a looking unto JESUS*. But if we do not look unto JESUS, as the propitiation for our sins, what comfort or what benefit can we derive from the sight? A receiving of CHRIST†. Can I have any pretence to receive him, and take possession of his merits, unless I am convinced, that they are offered or given to me? This is what neither the dictates of conscience will allow, nor the laws of reason authorize.—A resting upon CHRIST‡. But how can we rest on a surety, if we have no persuasion, that he has interposed on our behalf? Or how confide in a payment, which we believe to be made for others, not for ourselves? Surely, Theron, when I rest upon an object, I use it as my support. When I receive a gift, I take it as my own property. And when the Israelites looked unto the brazen serpent, they certainly regarded it as a remedy, each particular person for himself.

* Heb. xii. 2.

† John 1. 19.

‡ I find two words in the original, which expresses the privilege and the duty of resting on CHRIST, which implies such a state of acquiescence, as silences the clamours of conscience, and composes the perturbation of the spirit; which signifies the refreshment and repose of a weary pilgrim; when he arrives at the end of his journey, and is settled for life in a secure, commodious, pleasant habitation. *Psal.* xxxvii. 7. *Isai.* xxviii. 12. "It is not possible, says Mr. Bolton, to conceive a soul resting on CHRIST for salvation, without a persuasion, that it shall have life, and salvation through him." And I may add, it is equally impossible, without such a persuasion, to enjoy the acquiescence or obtain the repose, hinted in the aforementioned texts.

Ther. To cast ourselves upon CHRIST as an all-sufficient SAVIOUR ; and rely on him for our whole salvation ; is not this real faith ? This is what I heard, sometime ago, from a celebrated pulpit.

Asp. The persuasion, that CHRIST is an all-sufficient SAVIOUR, is undoubtedly a persuasion of what is true. But is short of the truth, for which I am pleading. Neither does it come up to the faith, by which I am saved ; unless I honor his declared good-will, as well as his own-sufficient power ; and on the authority of the former, regard the latter as my own.

You credit one part of the report, that CHRIST is a sufficient SAVIOUR, on the testimony of GOD who cannot lie. Why should you not credit the same authentic testifier *, when he repeatedly declares, that this SAVIOUR, with all his sufficiency, is really given to you ? So given, that your most confident appropriation cannot be disappointed.

This is what was taught, from the pulpit of infallibility ; and by those first of preachers, who spake as the HOLY GHOST gave them utterance. Let the convinced sinner, and the afflicted soul, *trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his GOD.* Let him not only reverence CHRIST, as the incarnate GOD, and therefore mighty to save ; but look upon CHRIST as his GOD, and thereby made redemption to him in particular. Thus let him lean upon the ROCK † of ages, without indulging a doubt, concerning his right to make use of it, or the possibility of its failing him.

Ther. To cast ourselves upon CHRIST then, according to your explanation, denotes an application of his saving merit to ourselves.

* The LORD, speaking by the prophet *Isaiah*, seems to wonder, that any can doubt of his will, after they have heard his call. “ *Wherefore when I came, was there no man, and when I called was there none to answer ?* *Isai.* 1. 2. Sure it must be owing to some suspicion of my power to save. With respect to my willingness, there can be no room for hesitation. My call puts this matter beyond all reasonable doubt.”—Therefore he proceeds, in the following words, to give the most unquestionable proofs of his omnipotence, *Is my hand shortened, that I cannot redeem ? &c.*

Asp. To cast ourselves upon CHRIST; to cast our burden, or to cast all our care † upon the LORD; are Metaphors, which may receive some elucidation, from an incident recorded in the acts. When the mariners and passengers, which sailed with St. Paul, saw their vessel shattered; saw the waves prevailing; saw no hope of safety from continuing in the ship; they cast themselves ‡ upon the floating planks. They cast themselves upon the planks without any scruple, not questioning their right to make use of them; and they clave to those supporters with a cheerful confidence §, not doubting but, according to the Apostle's promise, they should escape safe to land.—Be this what people mean, when they speak of venturing or casting themselves upon CHRIST, and I approve of the expression, I subscribe the doctrine ||. It speaks what I wish for my friend, for myself, and for my fellow sinners.

Let us shift our situation, and view the point in another light. Consider the blessed and glorious object of our faith.—CHRIST is represented by the similitude of bread, heavenly bread, for the hungry soul. Faith is characterized by eating the food. Can this be done without a personal application?—CHRIST is held forth under the image of living waters, ever running, and always free for the thirsty appetite. But let them run ever so copiously, let them be presented ever so freely, they will neither quench the thirst, nor refresh the spirits, unless they are drank ¶. To do this is the business of faith.—CHRIST is described as a

† 1 Pet. v. 7.

‡ Acts xxvii. 43.

§ It is queried, whether these people clave with a cheerful confidence.—To which I answer. It is certain, that notwithstanding their perilous situation, they were all of good cheer. How they could, in such circumstances, be so affected, is difficult to apprehend.—However, they made use of the planks, without any demur as to the matter of right; and clave to them as confidently, as if they had been bought with their money, and marked with their name. The confidence of appropriation, not the assurance of success, is the thing to be illustrated.

|| Such was the doctrine, taught by that judicious writer Mr. Boston. "This blood is for me, says the believer; for my pardon, my peace, my sanctification. And therefore I will venture my all upon it, for time and for eternity."

¶ Thus the Church of England explains those mysterious expressions, who eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood.

garment, to clothe the naked, and beautify the deformed. Faith is expressed, by *putting on* this commodious garment, and wearing this beautiful robe. Can any idea, or any expression, more strongly denote an actual appropriation?

Ther. It is evident, that many holy people in former ages, were not possessed of assurance.—What is the language of David? It is all despondency. *I am cast out of the sight of thine eyes.* To the same melancholy tune is the harp of Asaph strung. *Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore?*—The same jealous and distrustful air breathes in the complaint of the church. *The LORD hath forsaken me, and my LORD hath forgotten me.*—Why then should Aspasio set up a rule, which was too high to be reached, and too strict to be observed, even by those eminent saints?

Asp. You should rather ask; why have the best judges, and the most exemplary christians, in their several writings set up this rule? why have the Apostles of our LORD, and the SPIRIT of our GOD, speaking in the bible, set up this rule?—To which I might reply; because it is, of all precepts, the most beneficial. Therefore, they have not so much set it up, under the notion of a strict rule; as they have set it forth, under the character of an open door for the chief of sinners.

Your complaint, when put into its proper language, seems to run thus; “Why must we be obliged to proceed upon GOD’s bare word? why must we be obliged to trust in CHRIST alone, or to assure ourselves of salvation by HIM?” Whereas, instead of a complaint, it should be matter of exultation. We should rather express ourselves in this manner; “Bless the LORD, O my soul; that I a sinner, a vile sinner, should be allowed to take CHRIST and all his salvation, as my own; and thus to assure myself of pardon, holiness, and glory.”

This blessing was certainly enjoyed by the holy men of old. But like every other species of felicity in this world, it was enjoyed after an imperfect manner.—They had an assured persuasion of GOD’s present favor, and of their

own final happiness. Nevertheless, this assured persuasion was liable to the assaults, both of outward temptations, and of inward corruptions. Which might, for a while, impair its vigour, or eclipse its lustre, though not destroy its being. As, under a transient swoon, the spirits fail, the colour departs, but the vital principle subsists.

You may farther observe, concerning those pious persons, that, when they cease to exercise the confidence of faith, they lament the failure; *I said, this is my infirmity* *.—They chide themselves for it; *Why art thou cast down O my soul?*—They encourage themselves against it; *Hope in GOD* †, it is thy unquestionable privilege.—How could they do this? on what grounds, or from what motive? If they had no persuasion, that their ransom was paid, and their GOD reconciled. Consequently, that all their doubts were an injury to his fidelity and to his goodness.

Nay, the church, even under her darkest apprehensions, still speaks the sentiment, still retains the grace, for which I am pleading. My LORD, uttered with her lips, argue, an applicatory faith in her heart.—So copious and pregnant are the evidences of this precious doctrine! It is confirmed by that very passage, which was produced for its confirmation.

Ther. If this be the sentiment of the church in general, it is also the temper of her particular members? was each of them animated by this firm and lively faith?

Asp. Let these particular persons appear, and answer for themselves.—Hear the declaration of the Psalmist; *Bless the LORD O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name* ‡. What is the cause of this holy transport, and devout praise? Is it, because GOD possibly may, because he probably will? No; but because HE actually does forgive: *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities*.—Take notice of Job's belief, and Job's support; amidst his unexampled sufferings. *I know that my REDEEMER liveth*; not only

* *Psalm lxxviii. 10.* † *Psalm xlii. 5.*

‡ *Psalm ciii. 1, 2.*

that there is a Redeemer, but that he is, together with all his saving benefits, *mine*. Which being a truth so sweet and delightful, is expressed a second time ; *whom I shall see for myself**, to my own advantage, and for mine own comfort. I shall see him exerting his almighty power and infinite mercy, to rescue my body from the grave, and to deliver my soul from hell.—What was Habakkuk's security, amidst the threatening, the tremendous, the triumphant malice of his own, and his country's enemies ? *The LORD GOD is my strength*. He says not, *I wish, I pray* for the divine favor, and the divine succour ; but I am persuaded, they both are mine ; my inestimable portion, and my inviolable safeguard. *He will make my feet like Hind's feet, so that I shall escape from all danger ; and he will make me walk upon mine high places, beyond the reach of every evil†*.

Ther. Is this the language of believers under the New Testament dispensation ?

Asp. Under every dispensation, Theron.—They who lived before the law, *were persuaded†* of the promises ; had not the least distrust with regard to the certainty of their performance. Nay ; they *embraced them* as their own ; they received them with a particular application ; and hugged them, as it were, to their very souls.—They who lived under the law could say ; *As far as the East is from the West, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us§*.—Our transgressions ; he hath removed ; from us. This is the acknowledgement, not of David alone, but of the Jewish church. Every true Israelite either made it, or was authorized and exhorted to make it.—And can you imagine that, in the days of the gospel, when our advantages are greater and our light is clearer, our faith should be weaker ? St. Peter makes a profession, which excludes all doubting ; “ I am a witness of the sufferings of CHRIST, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed¶. St. Paul

* Job xix. 25, 27.

† Hab. lii. 10.

‡ Heb. xi. 13.

§ Psal. cii. 12.

¶ 1 Pet. v. 1.

answers in the same heroic strain ; “ I am persuaded that
 “ neither life, nor death, nor any creature, shall be able to
 “ separate me from the love of GOD, which is in CHRIST
 “ JESUS my LORD †.” With both which, the confession
 of faith recorded by St. Luke, is exactly correspondent ;
 “ We believe that, through the grace of the LORD JESUS
 “ CHRIST, we shall be saved even as they ‡.”

Ther. Was not this a privilege peculiar to the Apostles ?

Asp. By no means. All believers are brethren, and have
like precious faith — St. Paul congratulates himself and the
 christians at Ephesus, with these delightful words ; “ In
 “ whom we have redemption, through his blood, even the
 “ forgiveness of sins.” Forgiveness he mentions, not as a
 blessing proposed for their acquisition, but as consigned
 over to their souls, and manifested in their consciences.
 Their present portion, as well as their future plea.—St.
 Peter exhorts all his converts, dispersed in various parts of
 the world ; “ Gird up the loins of your mind, and hope to
 the end ;” or, as the word should rather be translated, hope
 perfectly, hope assuredly, for the grace that is to be brought
 unto you at the revelation of JESUS CHRIST §. Main-
 tain, not a dim, but a bright hope ; not a wavering, but a
 steady expectation, of eternal life. That free, but great
 gift of which the LORD JESUS, at his second coming,
 will certainly make you partakers.—The Apostle, writing
 to his Hebrew converts, encourages them all to hold fast the
 confidence—

Ther. Confidence ! This is a strong and bold word. It
 has sometimes given me a little disgust. But recollecting,
 that it is scriptural, I made no objection. However, I
 would gladly know, to what it refers.

Asp. To their final and everlasting salvation. It is ex-
 plained by the sacred writer himself. Knowing, that ye
 have in heaven, a better and a more enduring substance.—
 This is the confidence, which they are excited to hold fast,

† Rom viii. 39.

‡ Acts xv. 11.

§ 1 Pet ii. 13.

He adds, and the rejoicing of hope, firm unto the end †.—Whence it appears, that a hope amounting to confidence, and the joy which naturally results from such a hope, were the common portion of christians; possessed, not barely by some few exalted saints, but by the followers of JESUS in general.—I might bring many more instances. But why should I multiply proofs? Since the beloved disciple declares! These things have I written unto you, that believe on the name of the SON of GOD, that ye may know that ye have eternal life ‡

Ther. True, Aspasio. This coincides with my apprehensions. The scriptures were written—first that we may believe, and be entitled to eternal life—next, that we may have the *knowledge* of our belief, and a consciousness of our title.—The Apostle supposes his correspondents to possess the former, yet not to have attained the latter.

Asp. Is it certain, that he makes such a supposition? He writes, I imagine, not with a view of leading them to either, but of *confirming* them in both.—He intimates, that the privilege and the comfort should go together. If we believe, that CHRIST is our surety; we would be persuaded, that he has paid our debt, and satisfied justice to the very uttermost farthing. If we believe, that CHRIST is our bridegroom; we should rest assured, that his righteousness, his inheritance, and his kingdom are ours. And why should we take pains to separate, what GOD's word and the very nature of things have united? Will this turn to our advantage? Must it not issue in our loss?—Besides, according to your own interpretation, whoever falls short of this cheering knowledge, falls short of one great end for which the scriptures were written. He receives not his full reward. He only gleans, where he might *reap*: or rather, he is tossed on the ocean: whereas, *they that believe*, have gained the port; have dropped their anchor; and enter into rest §.

† Heb. iii. 6.

‡ 1 John v. 13.

§ Heb. iv. iii.

Ther. Believed! What! That our sins are laid upon CHRIST? That he was obedient in our stead? That all spiritual blessings are thereby procured for our—even for our enjoyment? Is this the faith, which the Apostle means?

Asp. The blessings you have enumerated, are the sum and substance of the gospel. And I know of no other justifying faith, but that which relates of the gospel, and believes its report *. Nor can I think, that any other belief will administer the tranquility, or produce the rest, specified by the Apostle.—But why this insignificant expression, *I think*? Hear a better judge, and a more authentic witness. Hear what a celebrated divine and an admired poet says, upon the subject. Who has very happily stated the true nature of faith; that great duty, and great privilege, of the gospel!

O! for a firm, a lasting faith,
To credit what the Almighty faith!
To embrace the promise of his son,
And call the joys of heaven our own!

Our own! If we omit this circumstance, how poor and mean a thing is faith! Unworthy to be distinguished, as the leading doctrine of the whole bible. Scarce worthy of a single wish from any one, or of another word from us.—If we do not comprise this in our faith, what do we more than apostate spirits? They are persuaded, that CHRIST and his benefits are bestowed on the elect, on the converted, on believers. But they cannot believe, that GOD gives CHRIST and all spiritual benefits to them. They have no ground for calling these blessings their own.

Here, I find, lies the core and root of our controversy. This is the precise point to be settled; what it is to believe? What is included in this very important word?—This question might renew our dispute, and cause the past arguments to recur. Whereas, I would gladly get rid of

disputation. We have already been too long detained in these disagreeable paths. However, since you have given the occasion, let me avail myself of another text or two.—For I would willingly drive this nail to the head; and not leave my friend unconvinced, on a subject of the utmost consequence.

The LORD declares by his prophet, *I, even I am he, that blotteth out their transgressions*. To believe, is to subscribe this declaration; to subscribe with our hand, and profess from our heart, “LORD it is done, as thou hast said.”—Faith is, if I may so speak, the echo of the divine voice. It eagerly catches, and punctually reverberates the joyful sound. Does God say, thou art my people? faith replies, thou art my GOD: not barely desiring, but confidently averring, an interest in his favor. This explanation of faith, is given us by a wisdom, which cannot be deceived; by a fidelity, which cannot deceive*.—Once more. Our LORD bears this testimony concerning Thomas; Thomas, thou hast believed. Now then, I think, we have an infallible touchstone. Provided we can discover, what that is, which JESUS CHRIST calls believing.—Whatever it be, it is the determination of truth itself; and should pass for a verdict, from which there lies no appeal. And this, this is the confession, which Thomas made, and to which CHRIST refers; my LORD, and my GOD †.—This, this expresses, what our divine MASTER calls believing. When, therefore, we confess with our lips, and are persuaded in our hearts, that JESUS is our LORD, who bought us with his blood; that JESUS is our GOD, who will exert all his adorable perfections for our good; then we truly believe. We believe, in our SAVIOUR’s sense of the word. We have that faith, which he allows to be genuine.

* Hos. ii. 23. It may not be impertinent, and it will be very comfortable to observe; that this passage respects, not a virtuous and obedient, but a wicked and rebellious people. GOD commands even them, who had hitherto walked together in fatal courses, to call him their father, in the very first step of their return.

† John xii. 28, 29.

Ther. Is this the constant language of faith?—According to this account, there is no difference between the infant and the adult; between the newborn babe, and the full-grown man in CHRIST. Your spiritual children, *Aspasio*, must be men from their birth; nay, born in all the vigour of manhood. Whereas, the Apostle makes an evident difference between the babes, the young men, and the fathers; between faith, the assurance of faith, and the full assurance of faith. If we are told of a Patriarch, who was strong in faith; we read of some Roman converts, who were weak in the faith; and we hear our LORD speaking to disciples, who were fearful and of little faith.

Asp. Between faith, and the full assurance of faith, the Apostle makes a difference. The one is the most exalted pitch, where the other is but an inferior elevation. Yet both are rounds of the same ladder. I don't remember, that the sacred writer any where distinguishes between faith and assurance. Faith and confidence are joined in the epistle to the Ephesians. It is the opinion of the best critics, that the sense of the latter is included in the former. The critic's opinion is confirmed by the Apostle's manner of speaking, we have access with confidence through faith†. Could yonder sun diffuse warmth through the air, if it had no warmth in itself? Impossible! No more could faith produce confidence in the believer, if, in its own nature, it did not contain the same.

The case of little faith, I think, may be explained from our LORD's own exhortation; O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? Here was a faith, not only in CHRIST's power, but also in his will. Nay; here was an appropriating faith, by which the Apostle applied both to himself.—“ I verily believe, that my divine MASTER is
 “ able to preserve me, even though I venture to tread upon
 “ this tempestuous sea. I am persuaded likewise, that he
 “ will uphold me, and not suffer his servant to perish in
 “ the hazardous enterprize.” Nothing less than this could

† Eph. iii. 12.

have produced that hazardous enterprize, or have emboldened him to walk upon the rolling billows.

Do you not discern, in this instance, some degree of personal application, some real assurance of faith? 'Tis true, this faith was violently assailed by doubts, and greatly in-feeble by fears*, yet still, it was of the applicatory kind. He can, he will, were expressive of its nature; though the boisterous winds, and the terrifying appearance of things, almost drowned its voice, or stifled the words in their utterance.

Ther. If you allow no difference between faith and confidence, I am very sure, St John puts a difference between babes, young men, and fathers.

Asp. He does, Theron. And so would I. Neither can I think, of any thing more proper to explain my meaning, or establish my tenet, than your own comparison.—In some fruitful family, you may see one child in leading-strings; another able to walk by itself; a third come home, improved and cultivated, from the school of literature. Observe their speech. One lisps out a few broken sentences; another talks as learned to express himself, with tolerable propriety. Yet each speaks the same language, notwithstanding the various degrees of fluency in their utterance, or purity in their diction.—So faith always speaks one and the same uniform language. Whether she lisps or stammers; whether she whispers in faint accents, or raises her voice in a more manly tone; this is still the unvaried import of her speech; *GOD, even our own GOD, will give us his blessing.* Can you forget, how St. John addresses even his little chil-

N x

* I must beg of the candid reader, to take particular notice of this limitation; and must intereat the impartial examiner, not to forget this concession. We no where suppose, that a freedom from all fears, and a superiority to all doubts, are essential to the believer, or form his invariable character. We speak of faith considered in itself; and only affirm, that an appropriating persuasion, or an assurance of salvation by *CHRIST*, is its true, genuine, adequate nature. That which properly answers to the divine report, and to the divine grant of a SAVIOUR. That which properly takes hold of, and depends upon, the faithfulness of GOD, pledged in his word. This assurance, we allow, may be encumbered with doubts, and may conflict with fears. But still it is assurance—real assurance—and proves itself to be such, by opposing and struggling with the contrary principle.

dren? *I write unto you, little children, because your sins ARE FORGIVEN* †.

Ther. Will not this account discourage some, and offend others, whose experience comes short of any such persuasion?

Asp. I would not offend the meanest, nor discourage the weakest of my REDEEMER's servants—As for offence; that cannot be given, and ought not be taken, when all we advance is strictly conformable to the unerring oracles. Whereas, to qualify and attenuate the scriptural descriptions of faith, complaisance to our own experience—to make the unhappy fluctuations and unworthy suspicions, which possess the breasts of some particular christians—to make them the rule of explaining, or the measure of enforcing so capital a duty; this, sure, would be an offence to GOD, an injury to his word, and detrimental to the welfare of souls.

With regard to discouragement; I cannot conceive, how this should ensue, from informing sinners, that they have a right to apply CHRIST, and all CHRIST's merits to themselves: or from exhorting sinners to do this, without any hesitation, and with a resolute dependence. In this case, to doubt is to be discouraged. As much as you want certainty, so much you want consolation. The proper way to comfort these distressed people, is not to allow but to dissipate their doubts; to blow away those dead ashes, that the smothered embers may shine and glow.

Were we to inquire after the cause of that disquietude and despondency, which are so common among modern professors, I am inclined to suspect, we should find it lying hid in their wrong apprehensions both of CHRIST, and of faith.—They look upon CHRIST, as a rigorous and forbidding monarch, who insists upon some hard terms and high qualifications. Whereas, his heart and his arms are ever open. His heart as open, as infinite love can set it; his arms as open, as infinite merit can make them.—They look upon faith, as containing a possibility only, or at most a

† 1 John ii. 12.

probability of salvation through his name. It is with them a kind of *peradventure*. A situation of mind, fluctuating and pendulous. "Perhaps, I may succeed, and be eternally blessed. Perhaps, I may be rejected, and eternally ruined." Such a state of suspense, in an affair of everlasting consequence, cannot but create uneasiness and anxiety.

This uneasiness and anxiety seem to have been little known in the earlier and better days of the Church. And why? Because christians were then exposed to the rage of persecution? Because they were placed nearer the time of CHRIST's personal abode on earth? I rather think, because they were taught this particular and comfortable application of CHRIST and his righteousness. They exercised a confident affiance on JESUS, as their own REDEEMER; and were shewn a more direct way to obtain this blessed confidence, than merely to search after their own renewed qualities.

Ther. Surely, Aspasio, in this particular you differ, not from me only, but from the generality of the Orthodox.

Asp. I am sorry to find my self under a necessity of differing from any worthy persons, much more of disagreeing with the generality. This I can safely aver, that it is not from an affectation of novelty, or any fondness for disputing, but from a disinterested regard to the truth of the gospel. I should be glad to have the concurrence of all the serious, and all the pious. But I dare not purchase their approbation, I dare not attempt a coalition of sentiments, by diminishing the boundless riches of grace, or restricting the absolute freeness of salvation by CHRIST.

You are pleased to remind me of the Orthodox. Pray, my dear friend, what is the standard of Orthodoxy?—Is it the word of revelation? This speaks once, yea twice, nay some hundreds of times in our favour.—Is it the doctrine of our reformers from property? With these we jar not, but exactly harmonize.—Is it to be taken from the old confessions of faith. and the catechisms of protestant Churches? To these we appeal, and have the sanction of their authority.—Has the modern way of treating and stating this momentous subject so much to alledge for its support?

Let me farther ask—are we better than our fathers? Is christianity in a thriving condition, or practical religion on the advancing hand? The reverse, the melancholy reverse is undeniably true.—When our writers enforced, and our preachers urged, what I am defending, professors were alive, and animated with the power of godliness. Whereas, now we seem to be degenerated into the mere form,—We have a name to live, but are languid, listless, and it not dead *, yet ready to die.—It behoves us therefore to consider, whether the declension, the decays, the unfruitfulness, so justly lamented in the present age, may not be owing to the absence of this appropriating belief, of this assured persuasion.

A sweet assurance of pardon, a comfortable persuasion of our reconciliation with GOD, an established hope of eternal glory through JESUS CHRIST; these will be operative in the soul, as “a torch in the sheaf.” These will inkindle love, and increase watchfulness; these will beget the true humility of mind, and work an unfeigned abhorrence of sin; these will enlarge the heart with charity, and exalt the affections above the world. These are the proper, and the only effectual means of making the man of GOD perfect, that is, thoroughly furnished to every good work †.

But the doubting frame is not fitted to yield any of these fruits, Nay, I am apprehensive, there are several graces, which can hardly be exercised, several duties, which can scarcely be performed, so long as this spirit of diffidence prevails.

Ther. Name them, Aspasio.

* Rev. iii, 1.

† For the display and confirmation of these points, I do, with great pleasure, and without any diffidence, refer to Mr MARSHALL's gospel mystery of sanctification. Which I shall not recommend in the style of a critic, nor like a reader of taste, but with all the simplicity of the weakest christian; I mean, from my own experience. To me it has been made singularly instructive, comfortable, useful. Though I have often read it, I am never weary of reading it. And every fresh perusal, still gives me fresh improvement, consolation, and spiritual strength. Inasmuch, that was I to be banished into some desolate island, possessed only of two books besides my Bible, this should be one of the two; perhaps, the first that I would choose.

Asp I am afraid, lest I should seem to arrogate the office of a teacher ; which neither becomes my condition, nor is agreeable to my temper.

Ther. I beseech you my dear friend, let us wave ceremony, and have nothing to do with compliments. My soul is in jeopardy. My present comfort, and my everlasting happiness, are at a stake. And shall we suffer any little punctilios to overbear such weighty considerations ?

Suppose, you are a teacher ; I have great need, and am very desirous to become your scholar. For I freely confess that, knowing as I may seem in other instances, I am very ignorant in the great peculiarities of the gospel. And a Heathen would reproach me, if I should choose to continue in ignorance, rather than submit to information.

*Cur nescire, pudens prave quam discere mallet * ?*

Nay ; though I have read the Scriptures in a critical view, I have been an utter stranger to their spiritual meaning. Here, I am uninstructed as a babe ; here, therefore, I ought to be teachable as a babe. Yes ; in this respect I would become as a little child, that I may enter into the knowledge, and possess the privileges of the kingdom of heaven.

Asp. Your answer, Theron, shall be a law.—*Love to GOD*, is the first commandment ; and without all peradventure, is the principal grace. But, is it easy, is it possible to love GOD, before we have any persuasion of his love to us ? This is what the Apostles did not, could not do. And, if it exceeded their ability, it will doubtless be above the reach of our capacity. The thing may be attempted, the practice may be urged. We may see the necessity of it, and desire to perform it. But we shall never, never be able to exercise it, till we have some comfortable apprehension of GOD's reconciliation and good will to us. *We love HIM*—Wherefore ? From what inducement ? *Because HE first loved us* † ; and because this love hath been made evident to our consciences, by the light of faith.

What think you of *delight in GOD*? This also is a christian grace ; of eminent distinction, and unspeakable value. *But how can two walk together, except they be agreed?* We never covet an intimacy with the person, who declares himself our enemy. Nay, if there be only a suspicion, that he bears us a secret ill will, we shall be jealous of trusting him, and averse to approach him. This was the case of our first parents, immediately after the fall. Instead of drawing near to their CREATOR, with pleasure and gratitude ; they fled from him with anxiety and terror. And why ? Because they were under the alarming apprehensions of his displeasure.—Whereas, let us once believe, what the Apostle affirms : *When we were enemies, we were reconciled to GOD by the death of his SON**. Let us cordially credit, what the Prophet repeatedly declares ; *Therefore will the LORD wait that he may be gracious unto you ; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you †*. Then we shall seek his face with alacrity. Our affections will be on the wing to salute their Almighty BENEFAC-TOR. We shall joy in GOD through our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Ther. To the enjoyment of many spiritual consolations, and the exercise of several delightful graces, I acknowledge an assured faith is necessary ; but—

Asp. Ay, Theron, you may well hesitate. It will be difficult to fill up the chasm in your discourse. For my part, I know not any duty of holiness, which can be performed aright, without some degree of this confiding faith.—We are to *walk worthy of HIM, who hath called us to his kingdom and glory ‡* : but if we doubt, whether we in particular are called, how can this influence our conversation ?—We are to be followers of GOD, as his dear children §. But if we do not, cannot, will not believe, so as to cry “ Abba “ FATHER,” how can such a consideration sway our hearts ?—Nay ; upon what principles can such a person address himself to discharge any office of the christian life ?

* Rom. v. 10.

† Isai. xxx. 18.

‡ 1 Thess. ii. 12.

§ Eph. v. 1.

We are to abound in the works of the LORD, from the animating prospect of a glorious resurrection*. This he cannot do; because he apprehends himself to have no lot or portion in the blessed hope.—We are to open our hands in charity to others, under a view of that heavenly kingdom, which was prepared for us before the foundation of the world†: We are to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, on account of those precious promises, which are freely given to us in CHRIST JESUS ‡: but where unbelieving doubts predominate, these endearing and invigorating motives are lost. The man has no interest in the encouraging promises, has no title to the blissful inheritance; consequently, these sinews of evangelical obedience, with respect to him, are benumbed, withered, dead.

Once again; a true christian, instead of dreading, loves the day of CHRIST's final and glorious appearing. St. Peter tells us, he looks for it, with pleasing expectation, as Sisera's mother for the return of her son. He hastens to it in ardent desire, as the enamoured bridegroom to the wish'd-for hour of his nuptials. Which, I think can neither be reasonable nor a practicable thing, unless we have some cheering and established hope, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, and see him as he is.

Ther. Such a man may make prayers and supplications. Though he cannot rejoice in the privileges, he may request them at the throne of grace.

Asp. Prayer is a great duty, and as great a privilege. I wish my dear Theron the spirit of grace and supplication. This will be better, incomparably better and more advantageous, than a key to hidden treasures. But how can you pray with humble boldness, or with lively hope, unless you believe? Believe, that CHRIST is your High-Priest, is your intercessor with the FATHER; and, with all the incense of his infinite merit, presents your petitions? Then, and then only, can you have, what the Apostle calls, bold-

* *

* 1 Cor. xv. 58

† Matt. xxv. 34

‡ 2 Cor. vii. 1.

ness and access with confidence *. Take notice of these vigorous expressions ; and at your leisure consider, whether they countenance the suspicious and misgiving temper. At present observe, how yonder lark warbles and mounts in the firmament ; as if she was bidding adieu to the earth, and going to mingle with the skies. An image this, of believing prayer ! Should a fowler shoot the soaring songster through the wing, how would she fall from her elevation, and flutter on the ground ! An emblem that, of distrusting prayer.

I know not how to leave this subject, without attending to the testimony of St. James : than which, nothing can be more awful, and nothing more decisive. It should really alarm the doubting disposition, as much as any solicitation to the most horrid sin. It should alarm the whole religious world, as much as the Beacons, suddenly kindled and all on a flame, would alarm the inhabitants of the maritime coasts. " Let him pray in faith, nothing doubting † ; for he that doubteth is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tost." Nay ; the Apostle adds—and it is an addition greatly to be regarded. It should abide with weight on our consciences. For it comes from a casuist, who could neither be too indulgent, through an access of compassion ; nor too rigorous, through an extravagance of zeal—let not that man, the doubting supplicant think, that he shall receive any thing of the LORD

Never then, my worthy friend, never more be an advocate for doubtings. Pursue them with fire and sword Give them no quarter. Deal with them as Saul was commanded to treat the Amalekites.

Ther. Do you then assert, that none can be a true believer, or find acceptance with GOD, if he be liable to any doubts ?

Asp. Far be the thoughts from my heart, farther still the assertion from my lips.—That there is no doubting in faith I aver ; and so does common sense ; and so will every thinking person. To receive CHRIST, and doubt of it, is

* Eph. iii. 12.

† Jam. i. 6.

impossible. To believe, that GOD hath given to us eternal life, and at the same time to doubt of it, is self contradictory in short; to doubt of what we believe, is utterly inconsistent.—Yet, though there is no doubting in true faith, there may be many doubts in the true believer. Because, he does not always exercise his faith, and never is perfect in his faith. He knows and enjoys, only in part.

So far from asserting, what you suggest, that I verily think, there is not a believer on earth, whose faith is wholly free from intervals of failure, or from the assaults of doubting. Corruption, inbred corruption, fixes its cancrus tooth in this, as well as in every other gift of grace. The most advanced saint, who can steadily say, *LORD, I believe*; has reason to add, *help thou mine unbelief!*—This however I maintain, that all kinds and every degree of doubting, are no less sinful, than they are prejudicial.—They are what the gospel censures, condemns, forbids*.—They are what christians must renounce; oppose; and treat, not as occasional enemies, but as irreconcilable adversaries. To these we must offer no conditions of peace, but, like *Hannibal* at the altar, swear perpetual war.

Methinks, I would borrow the fine figurative language of the Church: which, if it has not a direct reference to this subject, may very properly be accommodated to it—Take us the foxes, those little foxes. They are little in size, and seem not very formidable. But they are extremely mischievous, and spoil our vines. They prey upon our comfort; they eat away the vigour of our obedience; and make all our graces a mere dwarf, if not a dead shrub.

O o

* Mat. xiv. 31. Luke xii. 29 1 Tim. ii. 8.



DIALOGUE XVIII.

SEE, *Theron*! See yonder black and low-hung cloud! it points this way. It is big with a shower! It marches on apace; and will soon be over our heads. We must instantly fly to shelter.

Ther. It is well we have this summer-house for our shelter. The thickest boughs would be insufficient to screen us. I think, I never saw a more impetuous burst of rain. A shower! No, 'tis a descending *deluge*. The large, ropy, reeking drops, come down like a torrent*.—Surprising! What a dreadful *flash* was there! a sheet of sulphureous fire, launched from the dismal gloom, and wrapping the whole skies in a blaze?—Not a moment's interval, between the lightning's rage, and the *thunder's* roar. How sudden and vast the explosion! What a deep, prolonged, tremendous peal ensues! it seems, as if the poles of earth, and the pillars of nature cracked.

See, my dear *Aspasio*! See the direful havock; the horrid effects of this elementary tumult.—Yonder oak, which reared its towering head aloft, and spread wide its graceful branches, is, in the twinkling of an eye, turned into a *nak-*

* Come down like a torrent -- Psal. lxxvii. 17. In this manner, the clouds poured out water, while the air thundered, and the arrows of the *ALMIGHTY* went abroad -- Mr. Addison, if I remember right, advances the Plalmist's description of a storm at sea; because, it dwells only upon the grand and most striking circumstances; without descending, like Virgil's enervated representation, to such little particulars, as the cries of men, and the noise of oars. *Clamorous Virum, Soudorque Rudetum.* -- This description of a tempest is, I think, equally admirable on the same account. The three greatest and most terrible peculiarities are selected, and expressed with all the conciseness, yet with all the vigour, which the page can give.

cd trunk. There it stands, singed and tore ; stripped of its verdant honors *, and surrounded with its own shattered fragments. How fearful is the artillery of heaven !

Asp. And why—why did not the blow fall on this guilty head ? Why was not the fiery bolt, which flew so near, commissioned to pierce our hearts ?—If our heavenly FATHER has been so tenderly careful of these perishing bodies, will he not be much more gracious to our immortal souls ? Will he not clothe them with that immaculate robe, which is the only security from the stroke of eternal vengeance ?—And let me ask, can this be a security to us, unless we are vested with it ! Could this building, though very substantial, have secured us from the rushing rains, if we had not betaken ourselves to its friendly covert !

CHRIST is represented, in the prophecy of *Isaiah*, by this very image ; as *a place of refuge, and as a covert from the storm and from rain* †. That is, his merits and death are a sure protection, from the curse of the law, and the damnation of hell. No fury of the elements so terrible as these ; no bulwark of stone so impregnable as those.—If this is a proper emblem of CHRIST, to what shall we liken faith ? To a persuasion, that the shelter of the summer-house is free for our use ? To a high esteem of its accommodation, an earnest desire after its protection, or an habitual tendency towards it ?—Would this defend us from the inclemencies of the weather ? Would this keep us dry, amidst (what you call) the descending deluge ? Would this esteem, desire, or tendency, unless carried into actual entrance and possession, be a proper safeguard, or indeed any manner of advantage to our persons ?

Ther. No, Aspasio ; neither would a persuasion that the summer-house is mine.

Asp. True : but a belief that CHRIST is mine, is like entering the summer-house. When the divine SPIRIT reveals the grant of an all-sufficient SAVIOUR, made and tendered to me a sinner—when I am enabled to confide in his death, as the reconciliation for my iniquities ; and in his

obedience, as the matter of my justification—when I live in the exercise of this realizing, appropriating faith—then I make that use of CHRIST, and receive that benefit from him; which correspond with the repose and security, we now enjoy amidst this hospitable structure. Then, as the prophet Isaiah speaks, *I enter into the chambers, the chambers of peace and salvation, and shut the doors about me* *.

Ther. May I then, from this instant, look upon CHRIST, his glorious person, his perfect righteousness, and his precious death, as my certain inheritance? May I firmly believe, that in this immensely meritorious REDEEMER, I have pardon of sins, the promises of the gospel, and all spiritual blessings, granted unto me without any condition or any reserve?

Asp. Why should you not believe all this firmly? You have the same reason to believe with a steady confidenc, as to believe with any degree of affiance. It is the free promise of the gospel, addressed to sinners, that warrants the latter; and the very same promise, under the same circumstances of unmerited munificence, authorizes the former.

You have heard my opinion, hear now what our LORD himself says; *let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely* †. The water of life is that, which produces, maintains, and strengthens the life of GOD in the soul. An office, which nothing can perform, but those spiritual blessings, you have just been mentioning. These let the thirsty, let the sinner, let whoever will, take; as freely, as he makes use of the most common refreshments; as freely, as he drinks of the running stream. This is the royal proclamation.—

Hear his gracious invitation. *Look unto me, and be ye saved* ‡; saved from your disquieting fears, by justification; saved from your domineering corruptions, by sanctification; saved from every evil, by complete and eternal re-

* Isaiah 26, 20.

† Rev. xxii 17.

‡ Isai. xlv. 18.

demption. To whom is this most affectionate call directed? Not to a few distinguished favourites only, but to *all the ends of the earth*. None are excepted; none are prohibited; and can my Theron imagine, that he is excluded?

Nay farther; hear our LORD's earnest entreaty; hear his tender and repeated importunity; "As though GOD did beseech you by us; we pray you, in CHRIST's stead, "be ye reconciled to GOD*." Hark! 'Tis the voice of infinitely condescending love, speaking by his Ambassador, "sinners, accept my great salvation. Enjoy what I have purchased for you, by my dying agonies. Do not suspect my kindness, or refuse my gifts. This will wound me deeper, than the spear which pierced my heart."—O! the grace of our exalted KING! He bows from his celestial throne. He almost kneels to his guilty creatures. He begs, he even begs of obnoxious sinners, not to reject his mercies.—After all this, can you entertain the least doubt. Theron, whether you have a permission to believe firmly?

Ther. This is extraordinary goodness indeed! I have often read these passages, but never saw them, till this hour, in a light so engaging, and so encouraging.

Ans. Should not this three-fold cord be strong enough to draw you dear friend: let me add (what must absolutely surmount all objection) the plain, express, peremptory command of the ALMIGHTY: "this is his command, "that we should believe on the name of his son JESUS CHRIST†." Pray, examine the language; not he allows only; or barely advises; but he commands‡. We

* 1 Cor. v. 20.

† John iii. 13.

‡ Yetter, at a recent time, was assailed by all sorts of temptations. In-
fernal spirits that his heart was great with anguish, his tears streamed from his eyes; and his
breath was the same. At all these pangs of distress, a person accosted him with
the following words; "now then, why dost thou mourn? Hast thou not known, that God
"both commanded thee to believe?"—When I read that word COMMAND, says
the writer, it prevailed more on my heart, than all that I heard, or read, or
thought on before.

Upon this Mr. Ambrose very properly argues; the LORD hath commanded me
to believe on his only begotten son. But because I cannot believe, unless I apply the pro-
mise to myself, therefore it is my duty to conclude, that the promise belongs to me.

are not only permitted, but strictly required. It is not only our privilege, but GOD's positive injunction.—Upon the discovery of such a SAVIOUR, methinks every heart should cry; “O! that I might be allowed to approach him! To solicit an interest in him! how gladly would I wait, ever so long a time, in ever so mean a posture, if I might at the last receive him as my portion!”—The superabundant goodness of GOD, prevents our wishes, and exceeds our hopes. “I freely give my SON, saith the LORD, and all his riches to you. I beseech you, as a compassionate friend, not to refuse him. I enjoin you, as an uncontrollable sovereign, to believe on him.”—Gracious! most amazingly gracious is this command! And give me leave to hint, it is the greatest, the most important command, that ever issued from the throne of glory. If this be neglected, no other can be kept; if this be observed, all others will be easy.

Now Theron, shall we not receive CHRIST, and look upon his all-sufficient merits, as our own? Is not our warrant clear and unexceptionable? Nay, is not our obligation strong and indispensable? Shall we still displease the most high GOD, and give him occasion to say? *How long will this people provoke me? And how long will it be, e'er they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed amongst them**, and all the encouragements which I have given to them.

Ther. Is this command directed to sinners†? Make this appear, and then I will readily own; that a fuller proof of your point cannot be urged; a stronger inducement to believe, cannot be produced.

Asp. You set me a task, as easy, as it is pleasing. If I could not demonstrate this point, I should be at a loss to discover any glad tidings in the gospel. I mention not the

* Numb. xiv. 11. See also Psal. lxxv. 11. 22.

† This is the great difficulty, to be got over by an awakened conscience. How she is startled and at a stand. Here she sees lions raging to terrify her, and mountains rising to oppose her. As this is the posing question; the scruple, that so often recurs in 't and expence; the reader will not wonder, if it presents itself more than once, in the Dialogue.

Jaylor of *Philippi*, who was prevented in the very act of suicide. I pass by the woman of *Samaria*, who lived in a course of fornication. I shall exhibit one proof only, which may serve instead of multitudes. Our LORD's commission to his Apostles is, *go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature**.—Should you inquire; what is the gospel? We cannot have a better expositor, than the angel from heaven. *Behold I bring good tidings.* The tenour of which is; to you is born a SAVIOUR, which is CHRIST the LORD†. A SAVIOUR, to deliver you from sin, from hell, from every evil. This SAVIOUR is the LORD; the great JEHOVAH manifested in your flesh; GOD himself, becoming incarnate, on purpose to accomplish the marvelous work.—Wherefore is this preached? Not to be the subject of speculation, but for the obedience of faith‡. That men may shew their dutiful regard to the divine testimony, by believing it for themselves. The only obedience, that can be paid to such a report.—Therefore it is added, to you is born.—But who are called, thus to believe, thus to obey? All the world; every creature. And can it be supposed, that all the world was holy? That every creature. was righteous? You well know, that, instead of being all righteous, there was none righteous, no, not one. They were altogether become abominable, and guilty before GOD. Yet was this obedience of faith enforced on, and enjoined to them; abominable and guilty as they were.—To this agreeth the *Westminster* confession. “GOD freely offereth unto SINNERS “life and salvation by JESUS CHRIST, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved.”

Ther. Truly, Aspasio, you put all my mistrustful apprehensions to the stand. Here is a proclamation from the blessed GOD—seconded by his invitation—accompanied by his entreaty—enforced by his command—and all addressed to sinners. I know not what can be a fuller proof of your point, or a stronger inducement to believe.

* Mark xvi. 15.

† Luke ii. 10, 11.

‡ Rom. xvi. 26.

Asp. Yes, my friend ; I can produce (if such a thing be possible) stronger proof still. Such as, I hope, will totally rout unbelief, and drive all her forces from the field.

GOD has not only invited us, entreated us, and commanded us, to live under the sweet persuasion, that his SON is our SAVIOUR ; but he has given us the grandest *ratification* of this precious truth.—He has passed his word ; he has made us a firm promise ; nay, he has given us *many* and *various* promises, of this inestimable blessing. And *GOD is not a man, that he should lie ; or the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it ? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good ?* Heaven and earth may drop into nothing, sooner than one promise, or indeed one jot or tittle of his promise, should fall to the ground.

Besides this, he has given us, if I may so speak, a note under his own hand. He has *recorded* his promises in the bible, and *written* them with an everlasting pen. So that they will stand conspicuous and indelible, like a bill drawn upon heaven, and a basis laid for faith, so long as the sun and moon endure.

Nay, he has confirmed all, by the most solemn sanction imaginable ; by his *oath* ; by *his own* oath ; by the oath of a *GOD*. Though his word is sure, and his promise immutable, he adds (astonishing condescension ! adorable benignity !) He adds HIS OATH to all.—He not only speaks, but swears ; swears by himself ; swears by his own eternal existence ; that his promises belong—to *whom* ? Mark this particular with the most exact attention. To whom do the promises belong, which are ratified in this inviolable manner ?—To the holy, the upright, the accomplished ?—This is what reason might imagine ; but this is not what revelation affirms. To those poor sinners they belong *who*, all obnoxious and undone, like murderers before the officer of justice, having nothing to plead, *fly for refuge. Fly to*

P P

the Asylum, the Sanctuary, *the hope set before them* * in the blood, the righteousness, the ineffable merits of CHRIST.

Ther. May I then believe; firmly believe; assuredly believe; that JESUS the mediator, and all the promises of the gospel, all the benefits of his mediation, are mine? Pardon me, Aspasio, for reiterating the question. I am really, with respect to the obedience of faith, too much like that *Saxon* monarch, who for his remissness and inactivity, was surnamed *the unready* †.

Asp. I do more than pardon my Theron. I feel for him, and I sympathise with him. Not because he has sufficient evidence from the word of GOD, for the appropriating persuasion, so necessary to his happiness; but because I also have experienced that perverse tendency of my heart, to mistrust the infallible word of my GOD, as though he was less to be depended on than fallible man.

But let us reflect a moment—suppose any neighbour of substance and credit, should bind himself by a deliberate *promise*, to do you some particular piece of service—if he should add to his promise a note under his own hand—if he should corroborate both by some authentic *pledge*—if he should establish all by a most awful and solemn *oath*—could you suspect the sincerity of his engagement, or harbour any doubt with regard to its execution? This would be most unreasonable in any one; and to your generous temper, I am very certain, it would be impossible.—Let us remember, that GOD has given us all this cause for an assurance of faith, and more. Nay; I will defy the most timorous and suspicious temper, to demand from the *most treacherous* man on earth, a greater, stronger, fuller security, than the GOD of infinite fidelity has granted to you and me.—After all this, one would think, diffidence itself could no longer hesitate, nor the most jealous incredulity demur. Can we withhold that assurance from the unchangeable CREATOR, which we could not but repose on a variable creature?

* Heb. vi. 1, 18.

† Erasmus.

Ther. You rouse and animate me, Aspasio. O! that I may, with the divine assistance, shake off this stupor of unbelief! Certainly, it can never be honorable to GOD, nor pleasing to CHRIST, nor profitable to ourselves.

Asp. If it be, then cherish it; maintain it; and never relinquish it.—But how can it be *honorable to GOD*? It depreciates his goodness; it is a reproach to his veracity; nay, the Apostle scruples not to affirm, that it *makes him a liar* *. Whereas, by believing his testimony, we glorify his faithfulness; glorify his beneficence; and, as *John the Baptist* speaks, *set to our seal, that GOD is true* †.—I have been informed, that, when the late *elector of Hanover* was declared, by the parliament of *Great-Britain*, successor to the vacant throne; several persons of distinction waited upon his highness, in order to make timely application for the most valuable preferments. Several requests of this nature were granted, and each was confirmed by a kind of promissory note. One gentleman, particularly, solicited for the *mastership of the rolls*. Being indulged in his desire, he was offered the same confirmation, which had been vouchsafed to other successful petitioners. Upon which, he seemed to be under a pang of graceful confusion and surprise; begged, that he might not put the royal donor to such unnecessary trouble; at the same time protesting, that he looked upon his highness's *word*, as the very best ratification of his suit.—With this conduct, and this compliment, the elector was not a little pleased. “This is the gentleman, he said, who does me real honor; treats me *like a king*; and whoever is disappointed, he shall certainly be gratified.” So, the patriarch, *who staggered*

* 1 John v. 10: He that believeth not GOD, hath made him a liar. Now, or wherein? Because he believeth not the record, that GOD hath bore concerning his SON. What is this record, whose disbelief brings such guilt upon us, and puts such an affront upon GOD? It is this; that GOD hath given to us eternal life, in and with his SON. Not that he hath given the invaluable blessing to some persons, distinguished and peculiarly happy. Not that he hath given it to all the saints and all the elect. This even men of reprobate minds believe. Yet do they not hereby set to their seal, that GOD is true.—Therefore the proper belief is, that GOD hath given eternal life to both mankind, and to us in particular. So given it, that we, as well as they, are warranted and welcome to take possession of it by faith.

† John vi. 32.

not through unbelief, *gave*, and in the most signal, the most acceptable manner, *glory to GOD* *. Respecting him as a being, of boundless benignity, and eternal veracity

Is it *pleasing to CHRIST*?—Quite the reverse. It dishonors his merit; it detracts from the dignity of his righteousness; it would enervate the power of his intercession. Accordingly you may observe, there is nothing which our LORD so frequently reproveth in his followers, as this spirit of unbelief.—What says he to his disciples, when he came down from the mount of transfiguration? *O faithless and perverse † generation!* They were perverse, because faithless.—What says he to the travelers, whom he overtook in their journey to *Emmaus*? *O fools, and slow of heart to believe ‡!* They were fools, because slow to belief. What says he to the Apostles, after his resurrection? *JESUS upbraided them with their unbelief §.* He took no notice of their cowardly and perfidious behaviour; he inveighed against none of their other follies and infirmities, but he upbraided them with their unbelief. Not *gently rebuked*. No; this was a fault, so unreasonable in itself, so reproachful to their MASTER, so pernicious to themselves, that he *scarcely reprimanded* them for it; with an air of vehemence, and with a mixture of invective.

Is it *profitable to ourselves*?—Nothing less. It damps our love, and diminishes our comfort. It subjects us to that fear, which hath torment; and disqualifies us for that obedience, which is filial. In a word; this distrustful and unbelieving temper weakens every principal of piety, and impoverishes the whole soul.—Whence come spiritual inactivity and remissness? Whence proceed sterility and unfruitfulness in the knowledge of CHRIST? St. Peter ascribes them all to an habitual unbelief. Such persons, he says, *have forgotten that they were purged from their former sins ||.* A forgetfulness of this grand benefit is, to every

* Rom. iv. 23.

† Matt. xvii. 17.

‡ Luke xxiv. 25.

§ Mark xvi. 14.

|| 2 Pet. i. 8, 9.

kind of practical godliness, like a lethargy to the powers of the body, or like a blast to the fruits of the tree.

Let us then, my dear friend, *cast away this sin*, which so easily besets us both. It clogs our feet; it hampers all our powers; and hinders us from *running* with alacrity and speed, the race that is set before us.—What says David? **GOD** hath spoken in his holiness *; hath made an express and inviolable promise, that I shall be ruler of his people *Israel*. *I will rejoice therefore*; away with every alarming apprehension. Notwithstanding all opposition, I will exult in hope. Nay more; *I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth*; I will look upon the whole land as my own. I will divide it, and dispose of it, just as if it was already in my possession—Why should not you and I also say? *GOD hath spoken in his holiness*; hath expressly and solemnly declared, the promise; of an all-sufficient SAVIOUR is to you. We will rejoice therefore; confiding in this most faithful word, we will bid adieu to all disquieting fears, and make our boast of this glorious REDEEMER, Yes; notwithstanding all our unworthiness, CHRIST and his atonement, CHRIST and his righteousness, are ours. GOD hath passed his word; and his word shall stand for ever. Amidst all the fluctuations of our temper, and all the surges of temptation, this is our anchor. Its hold is firm, and its ground immoveable †.

Ther. I have heard some people distinguish, between the faith of reliance, and the faith of assurance; between the reflex and the direct act of faith. Methinks, I approve these sentiments, though I dislike the terms. The sentiments are happily adapted, to the relief of human infirmity; though the terms are rather too abstruse, for ordinary capacities to understand.

* Psalm lx. 6.

† This very important doctrine is more copiously displayed, in a sermon of Mr. Erskine's on the assurance of faith. Vol. III. p. 201. Were I to read, in order to refine my taste, or improve my style; I would prefer Bishop Atterbury's sermons, Dr. Bates' works, or Mr. Seed's discourses. But were I to read, with a single view to the edification of my heart, in true faith, solid comfort, and evangelical holiness; I would have recourse to Mr. Erskine, and take his volumes for my guide, my companion, and my own familiar friend.

Asp. I cannot say, that I am very fond, either of the one, or of the other. In my opinion, they both partake too much of the subtilty of the schools; and are more likely to create perplexity, than to administer godly edifying.—For which reason, I should choose to drop the difficult phrases, and not to dwell on the nice distinctions. Yet, if we must not dismiss them, without some notice, I would just remark—

That the faith of reliance, in its true scriptural sense, includes or presupposes a degree of assurance.—Includes; for what is reliance, but a repose of the mind, which is attended with tranquility, and excludes perturbation? How can this take place, if there be no sort of conviction, that the LORD is my light and my salvation? --Presupposes; for, who would rely on a satisfaction made, without being persuaded, that the satisfaction is for him and his iniquities? reliance, separated from this persuasion, seems to be neither comfortable, nor reasonable.

As to those, who insist upon what they call the reflex act of faith; sure, they mistake the nature of the thing.—This, if I understand them aright, is their way of arguing; “I am a new creature; I love the LORD JESUS in sincerity; I have the fruits of the SPIRIT. From whence it is plain, that CHRIST and his salvation are mine.” Now, in all this procedure, I cannot discern the least footstep of faith; no not the least trace of receiving a testimony, or relying upon a SAVIOUR. Here is nothing more, than a logical deduction of one proposition from another; a conclusion drawn from given premises. Grant the latter, and any person, without any aid from the SPIRIT, will infer the former. It may, therefore, more properly be reckoned an act of reasoning, than of believing; it is founded on what we ourselves feel, not upon the record of a faithful GOD; and it is styled, by judicious writers, the assurance of sense rather than of faith.

When, in conformity to the afore-mentioned opinion, we are advised to prove our title to comfort, by genuine marks of conversion; and taught, on this column to fix the capital of assurance; I would rather propose a question, than advance objections.—Is not this somewhat like placing the dome of a Cathedral, upon the stalk of a tulip?

Ther. No, say they; it was the practice of the Apostle himself; and he has left it upon record, as a pattern for all posterity to copy. *We know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.*

Asp. Observe, *Theron*, the process of the Apostle's reasoning. It is like the form of an inverted cone; where you have first the point, and from thence proceed to the base. So the sacred writer begins with the less, and ascends to the greater proof. He says, in one of the following verses; hereby perceive we the love of GOD*, because he laid down his life, not merely for sinners, but for us in particular.—Here, you see, is assurance by the direct act of faith. From this truth believed, from this blessing received, the love of the brethren takes its rise. Which may very justly be admitted as an evidence, that our faith is real, and our assurance no delusion. As yonder leaves may serve to distinguish the particular species, and ascertain the healthy state, of the trees on which they grow.

When your tenants bring in their rent, this affords no contemptible evidence, that the lands, which they respectively occupy, are yours. But this is a proof which does not occur, either every day or every week; it is occasional only, and of the subordinate kind.—The grand demonstration, that which is always at hand, and always forcible, is, your possession of the deeds of conveyance. Thus, the promise of GOD in his divine word is our charter, or the authentic conveyance of our right to pardon and salvation.

Make just the same difference between this promise and your own holiness, as you make between the writings of your estate and the receipt of the revenues, you will then judge aright, because your judgment will coincide with the Apostle's.

* 1 John iii. 16. The word GOD is not in the original. It was omitted by the Apostle, just as the particular name is omitted by Mary, when she speaks to the gardener, *say thou hast borne him hence*—and by the Church, when she addresses the sacred object of her affection; let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, *John* xx. 13. Cantor 1. 1.—In all which places, there is a language, a very emphatical language, even in the sentence. It declares, how deeply the heart was penetrated—how totally the thoughts were possessed, by the beloved and illustrious subject. It expresses also the fervent desire, and amiableness of the person meant; as though he, and he alone, either as, or deserving to be known and admired by all. For which reason, to mention his name, or display his excellencies, seemed as needless, as to show light to the opened eye.

Besides; this method of seeking peace and assurance I, fear, will perplex the simple-minded; and cherish, rather than suppress, the fluctuations of doubt. For, let the marks be what you please, a love of the brethren, or a love of all righteousness, a change of heart or an alteration of life; these good qualifications are sometimes like stars at noon-day, not easily, if at all, discernable; or else they are like a glow-worm in the night, glimmering, rather than shining. Consequently will yield, at the best, but a feeble, at the worst, a very precarious evidence.—If, in such a manner, we should acquire some little assurance, how soon may it be unsettled by the incursions of daily temptation, or destroyed by the insurrection of remaining sin! at such a juncture, how will it keep its standing! How retain its being! it will fare like a tottering wall, before the tempest; or be as the rush without mire, and the flag without water*.

Instead therefore of poring on our own hearts, to discover, by inherent qualities, our interest in CHRIST, I should rather renew my application to the free and faithful promise of the LORD; assert and maintain my title on this unalterable ground.—“ Pardon is mine, I would say, grace “ is mine, CHRIST and all his spiritual blessings are mine. “ Why? Because I am conscious of sanctifying operations “ in my own breast? Rather because GOD hath spoken “ in his holiness; because all these precious privileges are “ consigned over to me in the everlasting gospel, with a “ clearness unquestionable as the truth, with a certainty inviolable as the oath of GOD.”

Cast your eye into yonder meadow. Take notice of that industrious fisherman, how intent he is upon the pursuit of his business! He has just thrown his net, and taken a considerable booty. You do not see him spending his time in idle triumphs, on account of his success. He does not stand to measure the dimensions of the fish, or compute the value of his prize. But having without delay, secured the captives; he prepares for another cast, and hopes for another draught.

So let us, instead of exulting in any past acquisitions, seek a fresh to the inexhaustible fulness of GOD our SAVIOUR. If we have been blessed with any taste of his goodness, or any tokens of his love, let us not too fondly dote upon the sweetness of such experiences. Let us not make them the foundation of our confidence, but only so many encouragements to persevere and advance believing; That, having life and having peace from our divine HEAD, we may have them *more abundantly* *. Then will be fulfilled the saying which is written; *the just, the righteous in JESUS CHRIST—shall live*, shall not only be delivered from condemnation and death, but shall thrive in comfort, and flourish in godliness—how? By reflecting on their sanctification, or viewing their own attainments? No; but by the infinitely more encouraging views of their completeness in CHRIST, and by a fresh, a repeated, a never-ceasing exercise of *faith* †, on that HOLY ONE of GOD.

This the Apostle has testified, and this the prophet confirms. *Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is staid in a fixed dependance on thee* ‡. And why? Because, such a person, examining his conduct, discovers the evidences of a living faith? This answer many serious people would make. But the inspired writer has made another; which I cannot but prefer, and in which I fully acquiesce. *Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace, BECAUSE he trusteth steadily, habitually, incessantly, trusteth in thee*. Whatever variations may happen, within him or around him, in the frame of his heart, or the circumstances of his life, as to this grand point, he is fixed and invariable. He trusteth, still trusteth in THEE—in thee, O thou adorable JEHOVAH; that all thy infinite perfections are his shield, and his exceeding great reward—in thee, O thou exalted JESUS; that all thy inconceivable merits are his justifying

Q Q

* John x. 10.

† Rom. i. 17.

‡ Mai. xvi. 2.

righteousness, and the strength of his salvation—in thee, O thou eternal SPIRIT; that thou wilt never leave him, nor forsake him; but sanctify him throughout, and support him to the end.

This is the expedient, the effectual and happy expedient, to feed that lamp of godliness, and to quicken that flame of zeal; which having cheered us in our earthly pilgrimage, and animated us in our christian warfare, will be brightened into a crown of immortal glory in the heavens.

Here the disappointed visitants went in; and, after a slight refreshment, took coach.—As they were returning home, Theron observed, not without concern, the changed and melancholy aspect of things, in the territories of the husbandman. The fields of corn, which a little while ago, were gracefully erect, or softly inclining to the breeze, lay sunk and flatted under the impetuous rains.—Such, added Aspasio, such I apprehend will be our faith, if it is wholly separated from assurance, or if its assurance is erected on any endowments of our own.

Ther. If this is the case, what can be the reason, why so many people are totally destitute of all religious assurance? Have no notion of it, much less aspire after it? Nay; would be much surprized, perhaps highly disgusted, at the very mention of such a doctrine.

Asp. If people never aspire after the assurance of faith, or an *appropriating* interest in CHRIST, I very much question whether they are truly awakened, or really in earnest. They are like the men of *Ephraim*, whom the prophet styles *a cake not turned* *; neither bread, nor yet dough; neither absolute reprobates, nor real saints. Or, as our LORD explains the proverb, in his charge against the Church of *Laodicea*, they are *neither hot nor cold* †. Not frozen in insensibility, 'tis true; at the same time, not fervent in spirit; but indifferent and lukewarm in the concerns of religion.

Among the reasons, why so few persons attain this eminent blessing, we may reckon the following.—They under-

* *Hel. vii. 8.*

† *Rev. iii. 15.*

stand not the perfect *freeness* of grace, nor the *immensely* rich merits of CHRIST.—They never consider the unspeakable *value* of an assured faith; neither are they aware, that it is for the enjoyment of *sinners*. Yes, of sinners, even before they have one mark of reformation to shew, or the least evidence of any goodness in themselves*. Either they seek it not at all; or else they seek it, where it is not to be found; from some works of righteousness in themselves, rather than from the gracious promise of GOD in his word. Which is altogether as ill judged, and as sure to issue in disappointment, as if a person should go in quest of ice amidst the torrid zone, or expect to find spicy islands under the northern pole.

But whether people consider it or no, the value of an assured faith is indeed unspeakable. When this is wrought in the heart, peace will stand firm, and afflictions drop their sting. Prayer will return laden with treasures, and death will approach stripped of its terrors. The soul will be *as a watered garden*, and all her graces *blossom as a rose*.—When this is wrought in the heart, the gospel of CHRIST, will appear with new charms, and operate with new energy. Its hymns will no longer be a strange language to your ear, nor its privileges as forbidden fruit to your palate. You will then, as you peruse each sacred page, feel it to be the power of GOD, and *taste that the LORD is gracious*†. You will reap a benefit, and enjoy a delight, as much superior to those of the doubting reader; as the pleasure of *eating* this delicious peach, is superior to the mere description of its agreeable relish.

Bear with me a moment longer, Theron. For you can hardly imagine, what an improvement and exaltation this will give, to every *truth* you contemplate, and every *object* you behold.—When you contemplate the rise of kingdoms, and the fall of empires; when you recollect the great and astonishing events, recorded in the history of nations; how

* See MARSHALL's gospel MyR direct. vii. and x. Where this truth, little known, but every comfortable, is fully proved.

† 1 Pet. iii. 34

highly delightful, to say! "All these passed under the superintendency of *that hand*, which was pierced with the "bloody nail, and fastened to the cursed cross for me."—When you behold the magnificence of creation, and the richness of its furniture; the grandeur of nature, and the variety of her works; what a heightened pleasure must they all impart, if, as you view the glorious scene, your thoughts make answer to your eyes! "All these were brought into existence by *that adorable PERSON*, who "sustained my guilt, and wrought out my justifying righteousness."

O! that we may receive, by faith, this most blessed REDEEMER! O! that our faith may grow incessantly, *grow exceedingly**! Till it be *rooted*, like those full-grown oaks, under which we lately walked! and *grounded*†, like that well-built edifice, which is still in our view!

Ther. Most heartily I join in this wish. O! that every objection, for the future, may be superseded, as soon as started; and silenced, or ever it open its mouth! I must beg of my friend to inform me, how I may get the better of that unaccountable mistrust and diffidence, which I feel in my heart; and which have made me so easily susceptible of unbelieving impressions.

Asp. You have entirely cured me, Theron, of making apologies. Would to GOD, I might be as successfully instrumental, in delivering my friend from his doubts! That the gospel might come to us both, as it came to the "Thessalonian converts, not in word only, but in power, and "in the HOLY GHOST, and in much assurance‡!

Prayer is one expedient. Every good gift is from above, and cometh down from the FATHER of lights. CHRIST is not only the object but the author and finisher of our faith. *Lord, increase our faith*, was the request of the disciple, and should be the prevailing language of our hearts,

* 2 Thess. i. 3.

† Eph. i. 13.

Faith cometh by hearing *, by meditating on, by praying over, this word of life, and word of grace. Lay up therefore many select portions of scripture, many of the divine promises in your memory. Stock that noble cabinet with this invaluable treasure.—And never, never forget the *freedom*, with which the promise is made, and its good things are bestowed. You are to receive the one, and apply to the other, not with a full, but with an empty hand; not as a righteous person, but as an unworthy creature.

Make the trial. Exercise yourself in this great secret of true godliness. I am satisfied, it will be productive of the most beneficial effects.—Look unto JESUS as dying in your stead, and purchasing both grace and glory for your enjoyment. Come unto GOD, as a poor sinner, yet with a confident dependence; expecting all spiritual blessings, through HIM that loved *you*, and gave himself for *you*.—*He that believeth*, with this appropriating faith, *shall not be confounded* †, nor frustrated in his expectations. *He that believeth*, with this appropriating faith, *shall have the witness in himself* ‡. Nothing will bring in such light and peace, such holiness and happiness to his soul.—The *Ephesians*, thus believing, *were sealed with that holy SPIRIT of promise* §. The dispersed of *Israel*, thus believing, *rejoiced with joy unspeakable* ||. Those were *marked out* as rightful heirs. These were blessed, blessed with some delightful *foretastes*, and both were prepared for the complete fruition, of life and immortality. O! that we may be followers of their example, and sharers of their felicity!

As for those doubts, which have given you so much perplexity, and cost us so long a disquisition, look upon them as some of your *greatest enemies*. Oppose them, with all the resolution and all the vigour of your mind.—Nay; look upon those unreasonable doubts, as some of your greatest

* Rom. x. 17. On which account the scriptures are styled, the works of faith, 1 Tim. iv. 6.

† 1 Pet. ii. 6. ‡ 1 John v. 10.

§ Eph. i. 13. || 1 Pet. i. 8.

sins. confess them, with the deepest shame ; and pray against them, with the utmost ardour,—With equal assiduity and zeal, let us press after a stedfast, an immoveable, a triumphant faith.—Faith is the vehicle and the instrument of every good ; all things are possible to him that believeth *. Faith is the immediate and grand end of the whole gospel ; there things are written that ye might believe †.—Let us therefore covet, earnestly let us covet this best of gifts, and shew all diligence to the FULL ASSURANCE of faith ‡, and the FULL ASSURANCE of hope §—by the first, thankfully receiving present pardon—by the last, joyfully expecting future glory.

* Mark ix. 23.

† John xx. 31.

‡ Heb. x. 22.

§ Heb. vii. 19.





DIALOGUE XIX.



THE next morning, Theron ordered a cold collation to be prepared, and his pleasure-boat to hold itself in readiness.—Breakfast being dispatched, and some necessary orders, relating to the family, given—Now, says he to *Aspasio*, let me fulfil my promise; or rather let us execute our mutual engagement; and consign the remainder of this mild and charming day, to a rural excursion.

We will take our route along one of the finest roads in the world. A road, incomparably more curious and durable, than the famous causeys raised by those puissant hands, which conquered the globe. A road, which has subsisted from the beginning of time; and, though frequented by innumerable carriages, laden with the heaviest burdens, has never been galled, never wanted repair, to this very hour.—Upon this, they step into the chariot, and are conveyed to a large navigable river, about three quarters of a mile distant from the house.—Here they launch upon a new element, attended by two or three servants, expert at handling the oar, and managing the nets.

Is this the road, replied *Aspasio*, on which my friend bestows his panegyric? It is indeed more curious in its structure, and more durable in its substance, than the celebrated *Roman* causeys. Though I must assure you, the latter have a very distinguished share of my esteem. I admire them far beyond *Trajan's* pillar, or *Caracalla's* baths; far beyond the idle pomp of the *Pantheon*, or the worse than idle magnificence of the *Amphitheatre*. They do the tru-

est honor to the empire ; because, while they were the glory of Rome, they were a general good * ; and not only a monument of her grandeur, but a benefit to mankind.

More than all these works, I admire that excellent and divinely gracious purpose, to which providence made the empire itself subservient. It was a kind of road or causey, for the everlasting gospel. It afforded the word of life a free and expeditious passage, to the very ends of the earth. The evangelical dove mounted the wings of the Roman eagle ; and flew with surprising rapidity, through all nations.—Who would have thought, that insatiable ambition and the most bloody wars, should be paving away for the PRINCE of humility and peace ? How remote from all human apprehension, was such a design ; and how contrary to the natural result of things, was such an event ! Most remarkably therefore was that observation of the Psalmist verified : *his ways are in the sea, and his paths in the great waters, and his foot-steps are not known* †.

Conversing on such agreeable subjects, they are carried by the stream, through no less agreeable scenes. They pass by hills, cloathed with hanging woods ; and woods, arrayed in varying green. Here, excluded from a sight of the out-stretched plains, they are entertained with a group of unsubstantial images, and the wonders of a mimic creation.—Another sun shines, but stript of his blazing beams, in the watery concave. While clouds sail along the downward skies, and sometimes disclose, sometimes draw a veil over, the radiant orb. Trees, with their inverted tops, either flourish in the fair serene below ; or else paint, with a pleasing delusion, the pellucid flood. Even the mountains are there but in a headlong posture. Notwithstanding

* These roads ran through all Italy, and stretched themselves into the territories of France. They were earned across the Alps, the pyrenean mountains, and through the whole kingdom of Spain. Some of them, towards the south, reached even to Æthiopia ; and some of them, towards the north, extended as far as Scotland. The remains of several of them continue in England to this day ; though they were made, it is probable, above 1600 years ago.

† Psal. lxxvii. 19.

their prodigious bulk, they quiver in this floating mirror, like the poplar leaves which adorn their sides.

Soon as the boat advances, and disturbs the placid surface; the waves, pushed hastily to the bank, bear off, in broken fragments, the liquid landscape. The spreading circles seemed to prophesy, as they rolled; and pronounced the pleasures of this present state—the pomp of power, the charm of beauty, and the echo of fame—pronounced them transient, as their speedy passage; *empty*, as their unreal freight.—Seemed to prophesy? It was more. Imagination heard them utter, as they ran;

Thou pass the shadowy scenes of life away!

Emerging from this fluid alley, formed and over-hung by rocks and trees, they enter the level of an extensive meadow. The eye, lately *immured*, (though in pleasurable confinement) now expands her view, into a space almost boundless, and amidst objects little short of innumerable.—Transported for a while, at the wonderful variety of beautiful images, poured in sweet confusion all around, she hardly knows where to fix, or which to pursue. Recovering, at length, from the pleasing perplexity; she glances, quick and instantaneous, across the intermediate plain, and marks the distant *mountains*. How cliffs climb over cliffs, till the huge ridges gain upon the sky. How their diminished summits stand dressed in blue, or wrapped in clouds.—While all their leafy structures, and all their fleecy tenants, are lost in air.

Soon she quits these ærial heights, and ranges the russet *heath*: here, shagged with brakes, or tufted with rushes: there, interspersed with straggling thickets, or solitary trees; which seem, like disaffected partisans, to shun each other's shade.—A *spire*, placed in a remote valley, peeps over the hills. *Sense*, surprised at the amusive appearance, is ready to suspect, that the column rises, like some enchanted edifice, from the rifted earth. But *reason* looks upon it, as the earnest of a hidden vale, and the sure indication of

a adjacent town. Performing, in this respect, much the same office to the eye, as *truth* executes with regard to the soul, when it is *the evidence of things not seen* *.

Next, they rove in easier and delightful survey, over many a spacious tract. Where the fertile glebe spontaneously thrives; or the *cultured* field, more than answers the husbandman's hopes. Where cattle, of every graceful form, and every valuable quality, crop the tender herb, or drink the crystal rills.—Here, they see in reality, what those inimitable lines had often shewed them in description; *thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness. Then drop upon the dwellings of the wilderness and little hills are girded with joy. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the vallies also are covered with corn; yea, they sing* †.

At length, they contemplate, with increasing satisfaction, cities of opulence and splendour. Which spread the sacred dome, and lift the social roof. Where the senate-house and exchange detain the sight, with their majestic dimensions; and awaken in the mind the more venerable ideas, of justice administered, and of commerce abounding. Cities, no longer surround with the stern forbidding Majesty, of unpassable intrenchments, and impregnable ramparts; but incircled with the delicate, the inviting appendages of gardens and orchards. Those, decked with all the soft graces of art and elegance; *these*, blushing and pregnant with the more substantial treasures of fruitful nature. Wreathes of ascending smoke, intermingled with turrets and lofty pinnacles, seem to contend which shall get *farthest* from the earth, and *nearest* to the skies. Happy for the inhabitants! such was the habitual tendency of their

† Heb. xi. 1.

* Psal. lxxv. 11, 12, 13. This I think, is the finest description of rural affluence, and rural prosperity, that poetry or language can boast. There is something in our translation of the last clause, a certain *etriola felicitas*, which exceeds, if I mistake not, even the beauty of the original. The vallies also shall stand so thick with corn, that they shall sing and sing. The idea of smiling or laughing seems, more happy than all other images, to comfort with the peaceful, joyous aspect of a country, flourishing under the benignant skies, and basking in the lap of plenty.

desires*; if no other contention was known in their streets.

Villas, elegant and magnificent, seated in the center of an ample park, or removed to the extremity of a lengthened lawn; not far from a beautiful reservoir of standing waters, or the more salutary lapse of a limpid stream — *Villages*, clad in homely thatch, and lodged in the bosom of clustering trees. Rustics, singing at their work: shepherds, tuning their pipes, as they tend their flocks; travellers, pursuing each his respective way, in easy and joyous security.

How pleasing, said *Aspasio*, is *our* situation! How delightful is the aspect of all things? One would almost imagine, that nothing could exceed it, and that nothing can increase it. Yet there is a method of *increasing* even this copious delight, and of *heightening* even this exquisite pleasure. — Let me desire my friend, answered *Theron*, to explain his remark; and not only to explain, but to exemplify. — If we view, resumed *Aspasio*, *our* own *prosperous*, and compare it with the *afflicted* condition of others, the method I propose, will be reduced to practice. Such a dark and mournful contrast, must throw additional brightness, even upon the brightest scene.

* This comparison, I think, cannot appear vulgar to those persons, who have read, and who reverence the book of Canticles. There, the Church, ascending continually in devout affections to her beloved JESUS, and to her heavenly home, is characterized by this very similitude. Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke? Canticles iii. 6. I thought it must be confessed, that this similitude, like many of the illustrations used in scripture might have a sort of local propriety; peculiar to the people of that age, country, and religion. It might probably refer to those columns of smoke, which arose from the burnt-offering, or fumed from the altar of incense. If so, this circumstance must give a solemnity and dignity of the idea, of which many readers are not at all aware, and which indeed no modern reader can fully conceive.

May I take leave to mention another comparison of this kind? The enemies of the LORD shall consume as the fat of lambs; yea, even as the smoke shall they consume away. Psal. xxxviii. 20. As the fat of lambs; is not, to us, a striking representation. But to those, who attended the altar; who saw the unctuous and moist combustible parts of the victim, blazing in the sacred fire; is presented a very lively image. Which became still more apposite and significant, if this psalm was sung, (as some evidently was, 2 Chron. xxix. 27, 28) While the sacrifice continued burning. — None, I believe, in such a case, could forbear either to observe, or to admire the beautiful gradation; “the enemies of the LORD shall perish as yonder fat, which is to easily set on fire; and, when once in a flame, is so speedily consumed, nay, they shall be as the smoke, which is still more transient. Whole light and brilliant wreaths, but just make their appearance to the eyes; and, in a moment, vanish into empty air.”

Above, the skies smile with serenity; below, the fields
look gay with plenty; all around, the sportive gales.

Fanning their odoriferous wings, dispense
Native perfumes; and whisper, whence they stole
Those balmy spoils*.

With us all circumstances, are as easy, as the wafture of
the boat; as smooth, as the flow of the stream -- But let us
not forget those grievous calamities, which befall our bre-
thren, in some remote tracts of the earth, or distant parts
of the ocean. How many sailors are struggling, vainly
struggling, with all the fury of rending winds, and dashing
waves! while their vessel, flung to and fro by tempestuous
billows, is mounted into the clouds, or plunged into the
abyss. Possibly, the miserable crew hear their knell sound-
ed, in the shattered mast; and see destruction entering, at
the bursting planks. Perhaps, this very moment, they pour
the last, dismal, dying shriek; and sink, irrecoverably sink,
in the all-overwhelming surge. — The traveller, in *Africa's*
barren wastes, (pale, even amidst those glowing regions,
pale with prodigious consternation) sees sudden mountains
rise, and roll on every side. He sees the sultry desert, as-
cending the sky, and sweeping before the whirlwind —
What can he do? Whither fly? How escape the approach-
ing ruin? Alas! while he attempts to rally his thoughts;
attempts to devise some feeble expedient; he is overtaken
by the choking storm, and suffocated amidst the sandy in-
undation. The driving heaps are, now, his executioner;
as the drifted heaps will soon, be his tomb.

While we possess the valuable privileges, and taste the
delicious sweets of liberty, how many partakers of our
common nature, are condemned to perpetual exile, or
chained to the oar for life! how many are immured in the
gloom of dungeons, or buried in the caverns of the mines;
never to behold the all-enlivening sun again! — While res-
pect waits upon our persons, and reputation attends our

* MILTON, Book IV.

characters: are there not some unhappy creatures, led forth by the hand, of vindictive justice, to be spectacles of horror, and monuments of vengeance? sentenced, for their enormous crimes, to be broke limb by limb on the wheel, or to be impaled alive on the lingering stake. To these, the strangling cord, or the deadly stab, would be a most welcome favour. But they must feel a thousand deaths, in undergoing one. And this, too probably, is but the beginning of their sorrows; will only consign them over to infinitely more terrible torment;

To waste eternal days in woe and pain*.

While ease and pleasure, in sweet conjunction, smooth our paths, and soften our couch: how many are tossing on the fever's fiery bed, or toiling along affliction's thorny road! some, under the excruciating, but necessary operations of surgery: their bodies ripped open, with a dreadful incision, to search for the torturing stone; or their limbs loped off by the bloody knife, to prevent the mortification's fatal spread. Some emaciated by pining sickness, are deprived of all their animal vigour; and transformed into spectres, even before their dissolution†. They are ready to adopt the complaint of the "Psalmist; I am withered like grass; my bones are burnt up, as it were a firebrand; " I go hence like the shadow that departeth. While health, that staple blessing; which gives every other entertainment its flavour and its beauty, adds the gloss to all we see, and the poignancy to all we taste; health plays at our hearts; health dances in our spirits; and mantles in our cheeks, as the generous champagne lately sparkled in our glass.

We are blest with a calm possession of ourselves; with tranquility in our consciences, and an habitual harmony in our temper. Whereas many, in the dark and doleful cells of lunacy, are gnashing their teeth or wringing their hands:

* MILTON.

† A very little extension of thought will easily convince the reader, that there is a period of time in which some of these calamities do not befall our fellow-creatures in our part of the world or another.

rending the air with volleys of horrid execrations, or burdening it with peals of disconsolate sighs. And O! what multitudes, even amidst courts and palaces, are held in splendid vassalage, by their own domineering passions, or the vanities of a bewitching world. Far less innocently, far more deplorably disordered *, than the fettered madman, they are gnawed by the envenomed tooth of envy; they are agitated by the wild sallies of ambition; or feel the malignant ulcer of jealousy, rankling in their breasts. In some, avarice, like a ravening harpy, gripes. In some, revenge, like an implacable fury, rages. While others are goaded by lordly and imperious lusts, through the loathsome sewers of impure delight; and left, at last, in those hated and execrable dens, where remorse rears her saaky crest, and infamy sharpens her hissing tongue. — — —

Why this long pause? replied Theron. Your observations are as useful, as they are just. We should all be acquainted, at least in speculation acquainted, with grief; and send our thoughts, if not our feet, to visit the abodes of sorrow — That, in this school, we may learn a sympathizing pity, for our distressed fellow creatures; and see, in this glass, our inexpressible obligations to the distinguishing goodness of providence. Which has crowned our table with abundance, and replenished our cup with delicacies; permitting neither penury to stint the draught, nor adversity to mingle her gall.—Go on, I must entreat you, with your description of comparative felicity. We have a large circuit still to make, before we arrive at our intended

* Give me any plague, says an apocryphal writer, but the plague of the heart, Ecclus. xxv. 13. Upon which judicious and weighty apophthegm, Mammilla's speech in *Mary Thompson's Sophonisba*, is a very pertinent and affecting paraphrase.

Oh save me from the tumult of the soul!
From the wild beast within!— For, circling sands,
When the swift whirlwind whelms them o'er the lands;
The roaring deeps, that to the clouds arise,
While the arcing thick the mingled lightning flies;
The monster-brood, to which this land gives birth,
The blazing city, and the gaping earth;
All death, all tortures in one pang combin'd,
Are gentle to the tempest of the mind.

port. And I could wish, that your discourse might keep pace with the current.

Since you approve of the subject, answered Aspasio, I will pursue it a little farther.—We, the inhabitants of this favoured isle, breathe an air of the most agreeable temperature, and most wholesome qualities. But how many nations languish in a torrid clime, vaulted as it were with fire? They welter amidst those furnaces of the sun, till their “visage is burnt, and black as a coal*.”—What is far more disastrous, beds of sulphur and combustile materials, lie in subterraneous ambush, ready to spring the irresistible mine. Ere long—perhaps, on some day of universal festivity †, or in some night of deep repose—to be touched by heaven’s avenging hand.—Then, with what outrageous violence will they burst! rock the foundations of nature! wrench open the ponderous jaws of earth! and swallow up astonishing cities, in the dark, tremendous, closing chasm!

These earthquakes, it may be, both precede and pretend the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the sickness that destroyeth at noon-day ‡. They are, at once, a fearful omen, and a ruinous blow. The stagnating atmosphere, rank with malignant vapours, becomes a source of deadly infection; or, replete with poisonous animalcules, is one vast incumbent cloud of living bane. If the active gales arise, they arise only to stir the seeds of disease, and diffuse the fatal contagion far and near.—Unhappy people! the plague, that severe minister of divine indignation, fixes her head-quarters in their blasted provinces; and sends death

* Lam. iv. 8.

† There is a remarkable passage in Psal. lviii. 9. which seems to denote some such unexpected, but speedy and inevitable doom. The text is darkened, not a little, by the version admitted in our liturgy. I believe, the true translation may be seen in the following *Italics*, and the true meaning learnt from the *interwoven* paraphrase—*Speedily, or before your pots can perceive the warmth of blazing thorns, shall HE that ruleth over all, sweep away the wicked; sweep him away by a stroke of righteous indignation, as by a fierce and mighty tempest; so that even from the fulness of his luciferous, and the height of his prosperity, he shall be plunged into utter destruction.*

‡ Psal. xci. 6

abroad, on his pale horse *, to empty their houses, depopulate their towns, and crowd their graves.

Our island is seldom visited with either of these dreadful judgments; and has never sustained any very considerable calamity from the former. However, let us not be presumptuously secure, we have, not long ago, received an awful warning. The rod has been shaken, or rather the sword has been brandished, over our territories.—Who can forget the general consternation, which seized our Metropolis, on occasion of the late earthquake? And not without reason. For, of all divine visitations, this is the most terribly vindictive. The whirlwind is slow in its progress; war is gentle in its assaults; even the raging pestilence is a mild rebuke; compared with the fury of an earthquake.—The earthquake neither gives warning, nor allows quarter. Suddenly it comes; in a most unexpected moment; and spreads undistinguished ruin. Amazing blow! from which there is no method of defence, and no place of refuge.—Destructive visitation! which rends the firmest, overwhelms the stateliest works; and puts an end, in a few minutes, to the labour of ages.

Should almighty vengeance stir up again those fierce subterranean commotions: should the most high GOD bid strong convulsions tear the bowels of nature, and make the foundations of the world tremble like a reed: what, O ye careless ones †, what will you do? Whither will you fly!—See! the pavement sinks under your feet. Your houses are tottering over your heads. The ground, on every side, cracks and opens like a gaping grave; or heaves and swells like a rolling sea. A noise of crashing ‡ is heard from without, occasioned by the rending streets, and falling structures. Thunders, infernal thunders ||, bellow from be-

* Rev. vi. 8.

† Isai. xxxii. 11.

‡ Zeph. i. 10.

|| Before the overthrow of Catania by an earthquake, a noise was heard, vast and horrid, as if all the artillery in the world were discharged at once.

neath! mingled with despairing shrieks, and dying groans. Shrieks and groans from those wretched creatures, who are jammed between the closing earth, or going down alive into the horrible pit *.—Where now will you fly? To your strong towers? They are shattered pieces.—To the stronger rocks? They are thrown out of their place.—To the open fields? They are a frightful gash, yawning to devour you.—Where-ever you fly: in the wilderness of your distraction, where ever you seek for shelter: *as if, a man fled from a lion, and a bear caught him; or went into the house, and leaned his head upon the wall, and a serpent bit him †.*

I said, “there is no place of refuge.” But I retract the expression. One place there is, which will prove an inviolable sanctuary, and a perfect security. Behold, the great, the gracious, the adorable **REDEEMER** of the world, the glorious **MESSIAH**. Hither let us betake ourselves. Now, when the day of desolation cometh, now let us betake ourselves to *this strong hold*. Then, shall we have no reason to fear, though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea. For thus saith **GOD**, the omnipotent, the faithful **GOD**. *The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.* The **LORD** also, amidst this deep and dismal gloom, shall roar from **Sion**; and utter his voice, laden with horror and preparation for destruction, from Jerusalem. The heavens above, and the earth beneath, and all created nature, shall shake. But the true believer may stand erect and undisayed. Because the **LORD**, who dwells in the darkness, and presides over the storm; the **LORD JESUS** himself will be the hope of his people, to inspire them with a noble confidence; and the strength of his children ‡, to be their safeguard in every danger.

§ 3

=====

* Very memorable, and equally true, is the account of the earthquake, which visited Seely in the year 1755. It destroyed the whole of the island, and the number of persons, who were either demolished, or greatly damaged, was one of the most numerous and flourishing cities in the kingdom, was either destroyed, or lay in ruins, 18,000 persons.

† Amos v. 19.

‡ Psal. 124, 15, 16.

Or, if the true believer is involved, in the same promiscuous ruin with the ungodly; even this shall turn to his gain. It shall exempt him from the lingering pains, and the melancholy solemnities of a dying bed. Like Elijah's fiery chariot it shall wait his soul, with speed and safety, to the bosom of his SAVIOUR. While the hideous cavern, that wheels his body in the center, shall be its chamber of rest, till the beloved BRIDEGROOM comes, and the day of resurrection dawns.

We lift up our eyes, and behold the radiant colours, which flash the forehead of the morning. We turn, and gaze upon the no less beautiful tinges, which impurple the brow of evening. We throw around our view, and are delighted with numberless forms of fertility, which both decorate and enrich our plains.—Whereas, other countries are darkened with clouds, or over-run with swarms of locusts. Which intercept, where-ever they fly, the fair face of day; and destroy, where-ever they alight, the green treasures of the ground*.

Ah! what avails it, that the laborious hind sows his acres; or the skillful husbandman prunes his vineyard?—That spring, with her prolific moisture, swells the bud; or, with her delicate pencil, paints the blossom? Nor grain, nor fruit, can hope for maturity; while these rapacious and bareful creatures infest the neighbourhood. They ravage the gardens, and plunder the fields. They strip the trees, and shave the meadows. Scarce a single leaf remains on the boughs, or so much as a single stalk in the furrows.—*A fire devoureth before them, and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness: yea, and nothing can escape them†.*

* Fearful and astonishing is the account, which travellers have given us, with relation to these animals. Thavenot informs us; “that they fly in the air together, all compact, like a vast cloud; sometimes fifteen or eighteen miles long, and about ten or twelve miles broad. So that they quite darken the sky, and make the brightest day obscure.—Wherever they light, they devour all the corn in less than two hours, and frequently make a famine in the country.

† A fire devoureth before them, and behind them a flame burneth, Joel ii. 3. *This is one of those bold and expressive metaphors, in which the Hebrew language delights and*

Now, let the dreadful artillery roar from all its iron throats, and disgorge the heaviest glut of mortal hail.— Now, ye sons of slaughter; men skilful to destroy *; now hurl the sulphureous globes, which kindle into a hurricane of fire, and burst in ragged instruments of ruin.—To no purpose. The linked thunderbolts are turned into stubble; the bursting bombs are accounted as straw. These armies of the air, laugh at all the formidable preparations of war: *and when they fall on the sword, they shall not be wounded†.* surprising and awful destination of the ever-acting GOD! at once, to stain the pride, and chastise the guilt of man! these are a despicable and puny race; clad in no coat of mail, but crushed by the slightest touch. They were neither sword, nor scymeter, nor any offensive weapon. Yet, in spite of opposing legions, they carry on their depredations, and push their conquests. Terror marches in their front, and famine brings up the rear. They spread universal devastation, as they advance; and frequently give the signal for the pestilence to follow. Potent armies lose their hands, and haughty tyrants tremble for their dominions.

O! that the natives of *Great-Britain* would bethink themselves! would break off their sins by believing in the righteousness of CHRIST, and their iniquities by cherishing the influences of his divine SPIRIT! lest this overflowing scourge, under which some neighbouring kingdoms have severely smarted, should be commissioned to visit our borders and avenge the quarrel of its MAKER's honor.—

by which it is eminently distinguished. It signifies a total devastation of the vegetable produce. Such as in the case of a raging and relentless fire attended the progress of this pestilence; burning with such vehement impetuosity, that none could quench it; spreading such extensive havoc, that nothing could escape it.

* Ezek. xxi. 31.

* The prophet Joel, foretelling the plague of locusts, gives under the image of an embattled host, a most alarming display, of their terrible appearance; their impetuous progress; the horrible dread they raise, as they advance; and the irreparable mischief they leave, as they depart. Joel ii. 8.

† Isa. xxviii. 15.

Distant as those countless legions are; though separated from us by interposing seas; yet, if GOD lift up a standard from ear, or bat his * unto them from the ends of the earth; they come with speed swiftness.—Who will convey my wish to the ears, who will transmit it to the hearts, of my countrymen? That our land may always appear, as it does at present, like the darling of providence. May always resound with the voice of joy, and be filled with the fruits of plenty. May always wear the robe of beauty, and be adorned with the smile of peace.

How great are the advantages of peace! said Theron.—Peace at her leisure plans and leads out industry to execute, all the noble and commodious improvements, which we behold on every side. Peace sets the mark of property on our possessions, and bids justice guarantee them to our enjoyment. Peace spreads over us the banner of the laws, while we taste, free from outrage, and secure from injury, the milk and honey of our honest toil †.—Amidst the tumultuous confusion of war, who could have a heart to contrive, or a hand to accomplish, any such works of dignity and use? In those days of darkness and distraction, how languid to the sight are all the dewy landscapes of spring? How insipid to the taste are all the delicious flavours of autumn?—When the nation is over-run with armies, and embroiled in slaughter, *a trembling heart and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind* ‡, are the dismal distinction of the times. Instead of a calm acquiescence in our portion, our very life hangs in continual suspense.

But what are all the benefits of external peace, though displayed in the fairest light, and enlivened by the strongest contrasts—what are they all compared with the blessings of the gospel? By which sinners may have peace with GOD through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

* Hiss unto them, Ital. v. 26.

† Pax optima rerum, says the latin poet ---But the Orientals, I think, discover the most superlative esteem for this blessing, by making it the constant form of their salutations and the subject of their most cordial wishes for their friends; PEACE BE UNTO THEE.

‡ Deut. xxxviii. 65.

This, resumed Aspasio, suggests a fresh instance of happiness, which others want, and *we* possess; an instance, never to be admitted in our catalogue of peculiar mercies. I might add, never to be forgotten, by any *christian*, on any occasion.—While many kingdoms of the earth, are ignorant of the true **GOD**, and know neither the principles of piety, nor the paths of felicity; *the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give the knowledge of salvation, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.*—While millions of rebellious *Angels*, and men their native thrones, are reserved in chains of darkness, unto the judgement of the great day; we, though rebels, and apostate sinners of mankind, are delivered from the wrath to come. The holy **JESUS** (blessed be his redeeming goodness!) has endured the cross, and despised the shame, on purpose to rescue us from those doleful and infernal dungeons; where the prisoners of almighty vengeance

—————Converge with groans.

Unrepited, unpitied, unreprieved,

Ages of hopeless end *.

Now my dear Theron; let me repeat your own important words. “What are all the benefits of external peace, though displayed in the fairest light, and enlivened by the strongest contrasts—What are they all, compared with the *blessings* of the *gospel*?”—This brings the olive-branch from heaven, and proclaims reconciliation with our offended **GOD**. This composes the tumults of the mind, and the troubles of conscience. This disarms the warring passions, regulates the extravagant desires. In a word; this spreads such a beauty of holiness, through the whole personal and social conduct, as is far more amiable, than the most engaging forms of material nature.

O! that thou wouldst bow the heavens! that thou wouldst come down, *celestial VISITANT*; and make thy stated, thy favourite abode in our isle! that every individu-

al may be animated with thy power ; and every community wear thy resplendent badge !—Then shall it be the *least* ingredient of our public felicity, that the sword of slaughter is beaten into a plough-share, and the once bloody spear bent into a pruning-hook. It shall be the lowest upon the list of our common blessings, *that violence is no more heard in our land, wasting and destruction within our borders. Our very officers will be peace, and our exactors * righteousness. We shall call* (and the event will correspond with the name) *our walls salvation, and our gates praise.* Then shall every harp be taken down from the willows, and every voice burst into a song. “ In other climes”—will be the general acclamation.

“ In other climes, let myriads of curious insects, spin that delicate thread, which softens into velvet, stiffens into brocade, or flows in glossy satin ; which reflects a lovelier glow on the cheek of beauty, and renders loyalty itself more majestic. We are presented with infinitely *finer robes*, in the imputed righteousness of our REDEEMER, and the inherent sanctification of his SPIRIT. Which beautify the very soul, and prepare it for the illustrious assembly—of saints in light—of angels in glory.

“ Let eastern rocks sparkle with diamonds, and give birth to gems of every dazzling tincture. We have, hid in the field of our scriptures, the *pearl of great price* ; the *white and precious stone* * of perfect absolution ; a diadem, which will shine with undiminished lustre, when all the brilliant wonders of the mine are laded, extinguished, lost.

“ Let richer soils nourish the noblest plants, and warmer suns concoct their exquisite juices : the lemon, pleasingly poignant, the citron, more mildly delicious ; or that pride of vegetable life, and compendium of all the blander dishments of taste, the pine-apple. We enjoy far more

* *Isai. lx. 17.* Officers and exactors signify persons, vested with public authority ; who have it in their power, to rule with rigour. But these, instead of abusing their power, shall conduct the administration with all possible equity and gentleness ; with a parental tenderness, rather than a magisterial austeritv.

† *Rev. ii. 17.*

“ exalted dainties, in having access to the tree of life ;
 “ whose leaves are for the healing of the nations * ; whose
 “ boughs are replenished with a never-failing abundance of
 “ heavenly fruits ; and the nutriment they dispense, is bliss
 “ and immortality.

“ Let Iberian vines swell the translucent cluster, and
 “ burst into a flood of generous wine. Let the Tuscan
 “ olive extract the fatness of the earth, and melt into a soft
 “ mellifluous stream. We shall neither envy, nor covet
 “ these inferior gifts, so long as we may draw water out of
 “ the wells of salvation. So long as we may receive the
 “ unction from the HOLY ONE †, those influences of the
 “ COMFORTER, which not only make a chearful coun-
 “ tenance, but gladden the very heart. Imparting such a
 “ refined satisfaction, as the whole world cannot give ; such
 “ a permanent satisfaction, as no calamities can take
 “ away

“ Let Ethiopian mountains be ribbed with marble, and
 “ Peruvian mines emboweled with gold. We want nei-
 “ ther the impenetrable quarry, nor the glittering ore ; hav-
 “ ing, in our adored MESSIAH, a sure foundation for all
 “ our eternal hopes, and an inexhaustible fund of the di-
 “ vinest riches.

“ Be it so ; that our *isis* is but a creeping drop ; and the
 “ Thames itself, no more than a scanty rill ; compared
 “ with the magnificent sweep of the Ganges, or the stu-
 “ pendous amplitude of *rio de la plata* ‡. The wretched
 “ natives, even on the banks of those stately rivers, are at a
 “ distance from all the springs of true consolation. Where-
 “ as, we have a fountain, we have a river, that issues from
 “ the ocean of eternal love. With incomparable dignity
 “ and with equal propriety, it is styled “ The river of Life.” §
 “ It visits the house of the mourner, and revives the spirit

* Rev. xxii. 2.

† 1 John ii. 20.

‡ This river receives its supplies, from the long rains of the torrid zone ; and from the proportionably large rivers, hid in the bowels of the cordilleras, the highest mountains on earth. It is supposed to be the largest river in the world.

§ Rev. xxii. 1.

“ of the sorrowful. It makes glad the city, and makes
 “ happy the servants of our GOD. It quickens even the
 “ dead ; and every human creature, that drinks of its water,
 “ lives for ever.

“ Let Asiatic islands boast their mountains of myrrh, and
 “ hills of frankincense. Let Arabian groves, with superior
 “ liberality, distil their healing gums ; and ripen, for vigor-
 “ ous operation, their vital drugs. We have a more sove-
 “ reign remedy, than their most powerful restoratives, in
 “ the great MEDIATOR's atoning blood. We have a
 “ more refreshing banquet, than all their mingled sweets,
 “ in commemorating his passion, and participating his
 “ merits.

“ In short ; we have an equivalent, far more than an
 “ equivalent, for all those choice productions, which bloom
 “ in the gardens, or bask in the orchards of the sun. We
 “ have a gospel, rich in precious privileges, and abounding
 “ with inestimable promises : we have a SAVIOUR, full
 “ of forgiving goodness, and liberal of renewing grace. At
 “ whose auspicious approach, fountains spout amidst the
 “ burning desert ; under whose welcome footsteps, the san-
 “ dy waste smiles with herbage ; and beneath his potent
 “ touch, the wilderness buds and blossoms as a rose *. Or,
 “ of the sorrowful, It makes glad the city, and makes
 “ to speak plainly, the desolate and barren soul brings
 “ forth those fruits of the SPIRIT, which are infinitely
 “ more ornamental, than the silken gems of spring ; infi-
 “ nitely more beneficial, than the salubrious stores of autumn.

“ We have a SAVIOUR—tell it out among the Hea-
 “ then ; that all the nations on earth, partake of the gift,
 “ and join in the song—A SAVIOUR we have, whose
 “ radiant eye brightens the gloomy paths of affliction.—
 “ Whose efficacious blessing makes all things work toge-
 “ ther, for the good † of his people. Death, gilded by his
 “ propitious smile, even death itself looks gay. Nor is the
 “ grave, under his benign administration, any longer a den
 “ of destruction ; but a short and shady avenue to those
 “ immortal mansions : whose foundations are laid with

* *Isai.* xxxv. 1.

† *Rom.* viii. 28.

“ sapphires ; whose windows are of agate ; the gates of
“ carbuncle ; and all the borders of pleasant stones * ”

Pardon my rhapsody, dear Theron. Your own remark, added to the grand and lovely views, have warmed, have animated, have almost transported me. — Theron answered not a word : but sat fixed in thought. — While he is indulging his contemplation, we may just observe some other peculiarities of the prospect.

Here and there a lonesome cottage scarcely lifts its humble head. No pompous swell of projecting steps, surrounds the door : no appendent wings of inferior offices, skirt the edifice : no stately hall, slabbed with marble, and roofed with sculpture, receives the gazing stranger. But white-robed innocence, and sweet-featured contentment, neatness † with a gloss on her garments, and health, with a bloom on her cheeks, adorn the habitation. While virtue lends her graces, and religion communicates her honors, to dignify the abode : rendering the blameless hut superior, in *real* majesty, to a dissolute court.

At some distance, appear the hoary remains of an antient monastery. Sunk beneath the weight of revolving years, the once venerable fabric is levelled with the dust. The lofty and ornamented temple, lies rudely over-grown with moss, or still more ignobly covered with weeds. The walls, where sainted imagery stood, or *idolized* painting shone, are clasped with twining ivy, or shagged with horrid thorn. — Through isles, that once echoed to the chanter's voice, mingled with the organ's majestic sound, the hollow winds roar, and the dashing storm drives. Where are, now, the silent cells, the vocal choirs, the dusty groves ? In which the romantic saints prolonged their lonely vigils, by the mid-

T T

* Isai. liv. 11, 12.

† *Neatness*. — To exemplify and recommend this ornament of social life, is, perhaps, the design of a passage, which I have never seen satisfactorily explained. When our LORD gave a treat to five thousand men, who attended his preaching ; when he commanded them to sit down upon the ground, in order to receive his bounty : the most commodious manner ; it is added by the sacred historian, *there was much grass in the place.* John vi. 10.

night raper ; or poured their united prayers, before the lark had waked the morn ; or strolled, in ever-musing melancholy, along the moon light glade.—Surely, those mouldering fragments now teach, (and with a much better grace, with a much stronger emphasis) what formerly their unsocial and gloomy residentaries professed. They teach the vanity of the world, and the transitory duration of all that is reckoned stable, in this region of shadows.

Behold, on yonder eminence, the rueful memorials of a magnificent castle. All dismantled, and quite demolished, it gives a shading of solemnity to the more lively parts of nature's picture ; and attempers the rural delight, with some touches of alarming dread.—War, destructive war, has snatched the scythe from the hand of time, and hurried on the steps of destiny. Those broken columns and shattered walls ; those prostrate towers, and battlements dashed to the ground ; carry evident marks of an immature downfall. They were built for ages, and for ages might have stood, a defence and accommodation to generations yet unborn ; if haply they had escaped the dire assaults of hostile rage.—But, what vigilance of man, can prevent the miner's dark approach ? Or, what solidity of bulwark, can withstand the bellowing engine's impetuous shock ?

Those, perhaps, were the rooms, in which licentious mirth crowned with roses the sparkling bowl, and tuned to the silver-sounding lute the Syren's enchanting song. Those, the scenes of voluptuous indulgence, where luxury poured her delicacies ; where beauty, insidious beauty, practised her wiles ; and spread, with bewitching art, her wanton snares. Now instead of the riotous banquet, and intrigues of lawless love, the owl utters her hated screams by night, and the raven flaps her ominous wings by day.—Where are the violet couches, and the wood-bine bowers ; which fanned, with their breathing sweets, the polluted flame ? The soil seems to suffer for the abuses of the owner. Blasted and dishonoured, it produces nothing but ragged briars, and noisome nettles ; under whose odious covert, the hissing snake glides, or the croaking toad crawls.—Fearful intimation of that ignominious and doleful catastrophe, which awaits the sons of riot ! When their momentary gratifica-

tions will drop, like the faded leaf; and leave nothing behind but pangs of remorse, keener far than the pointed thorn, and more envenomed than the viper's tooth.

Perhaps, they were the *beauteous* and *honoured* abodes, where *grandeur* and *politeness* walked their *duly* round, attended with a train of *guiltless* delights. Where *amiable* and *refined* friendship was wont to sit and smile; looking love, and talking the very soul. Where *hospitality*, with *economy* always at her side, stood *beckoning* to the distressed, but *industrious* * *poor*; and showered blessings from her liberal hand.—But war, detested war, has stretched over the social and inviting seat, the *loom* of confusion, and the *stones* of emptiness †. Now, *alast* nothing but desolation and horror haunt the savage retreat. The ample arches of the bridge, which so often transmitted the wondering passenger along their *penal* way, lie buried in the dreary *mote*.—Those *relics* of the *massy* portals, naked and abandoned, seem to bemoan their melancholy condition.—No splendid *chariots*, with their *gay* retinue, frequent solitary *avenues*. No needy steps, with *cheerful* expectations, beseege the once *bountiful* gate. But all is a miserable, forlorn, hideous pile of rubbish.

Since riches so often take to themselves wings, and fly away: since houses, great and fair, reel upon their foundations, and so soon tumble into dust: how wise, how salutary, is our divine MASTER's advice! *make to yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when the world fails around you, when the springs of nature fail within you; they, as witnesses of your charity, and vouchers for the sincerity of your faith, may receive you unto everlasting habitations* ‡.—Whereas, whatever else we amass, is

* I say distressed, but industrious poor --- Because, I would not be understood, as encouraging, in any degree, the relief of our common beggars. — Towards the former, I would cultivate a tender and ever-yearning compassion, I would anticipate their complaints; and, as a sacred writer directs, would even seek to do them good.— but as to the latter, I frankly own, that I look upon it as my duty, to discourage such cumberers of the ground. They are, generally speaking, lousy drones; and their habitual begging, is no better than a specious robbing of the public hive.

+ Mai. xxiv. 11.

‡ Luke xvi. 9.

for our heirs, for our successors, for we know not who.—This wealth is truly emphatically called *our own**: it is an advowson; we have the perpetuity. Whereas, whatever else we possess, is ours only for a *turn* or in *trust*.

See the dreadful, dreadful ravages of *civil discord*! where-ever that internal fury stalks, she marks her steps in blood, and leaves opulent cities a ruinous heap†.—What thanks then, what ardent and ceaseless thanks, are due to that all-superintending, ever gracious LORD, who has dashed the torch from her hand; has broke her murderous weapons; and driven the baleful pest from our island!—May the same almighty goodness banish the monster from all lands! banish the accursed monster, with her hated associate rapine, and her insatiable purveyor ambition, to the deepest hell. Branded with everlasting infamy, and bound in adamant chains, there let them gnash their teeth, and bite the inevitable curb!—While peace, descending from her native heaven, bids her olives spring amidst the joyful nations: and plenty, in league with commerce, scatters blessings from clime to clime. While gladness smiles in every eye; and love, extensive disinterested love, leveling the partition-wall of bigotry, cements every heart in the best of bonds.

Near those heaps of havock, lies the spot, ever-memorable and still revered, on which an obstinate and fatal battle was fought.—The husbandman, as he breaks his fallow land, or rends the grassy turf, often discovers the horrid implements, and the more horrid effects, of that bloody

* Luke xvi. 11.

† The effects of what Virgil calls *Bella, horrida Læta*, were never displayed in colours that glow, and with figures that alarm, like those which are raised by the prophet Jeremiah, Chap. iv. 19. &c. As this is, perhaps, the greatest master piece of the kind, the reader will permit me to enrich the notes, with a transcript of the passage.

First we see, rather we feel, the effects of war on the human mind; the keenest anguish, the deepest dismay, and the wildest amazement. All expressed in a language, exactly suited to the subject—vehement—abrupt—disorderly. “My bowels! my bowels! I am pained at my very heart. My very heart makes a noise in me, I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war,—destruction upon destruction is cried; for the land is spoiled. Suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment.—How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet?”

conflict. He starts to hear his coulter strike upon the bosses of a rusty buckler, or gride over the edge of a blunted sword. He turns pale, to see human bones thrown up before his plow; and stands aghast to think, that, in cutting his furrow, he opens a grave.—The grey-headed sire often relates to his grandsons, hanging with eager attention on the tale and trembling for the event; relates the dismal, the glorious deeds of that important day.—How the fields, now covered with waving crops, were then loaded with mangled and ghastly corpses. How the pastures, now green with herbage, were then incrimsoned with human gore.

“ On that extended common, he says, where the busy
 “ shepherd is erecting his hurdled citadel, the tents were
 “ spread, and the banners displayed; the spears bristled in
 “ air, and the burnished helmets glittered to the sun.—On
 “ yonder rising ground, where the frisking lambs play their
 “ harmless frolics, stood the martial files; clad in mail, and
 “ ranged in battle-array. There stood war, with all its
 “ collected horrors; hovering, like some portentous cloud,
 “ and ready to burst into an immediate storm.—On the
 “ nearer plain, where the quiet steed grazes in safety, and
 “ those sober oxen chew the juicy herb, the fierce encounter mixed. There, the javelins, launched from nervous
 “ arms, and aimed by vengeful eyes, flew and reslew,
 “ whizzing with death. The arrows lightened * from the
 “ strings; and drenched their keen points, and dipped
 “ their feathery wings in blood.—Soon as this shower of
 “ missive steel ceased, instantly outsprung thousands of
 “ flaming swords. They clash on the brazen shields; they
 “ cut their way through the reeking armour; and sheath
 “ their blades in many a gallant dauntless heart.—Here,
 “ on this distinguished level, the proud insulting foe, presuming on victory, and boasting of their numbers, poured in like a flood. There, a bold determined battalion,
 “ of which myself was a part, planted themselves like a
 “ rock, and broke the fierce attack.

* Habak, iii. 11.

“ Then adds the brave old warrior, then the coward
 “ herd fled before the vengeance of our conquering arms
 “ Then, these hands strewed the plains with a harvest, dif-
 “ ferent far from their present productions. Then, *the fa-*
 “ *thers*, smitten with expressible dread, *looked not back on*
 “ *their children* * ; though shuddering at the lifted spear, or
 “ screaming under the brandished sword. *The fathers look-*
 “ *ed not back on their children*, though they fell among the
 “ slain, gashed with deadly wounds; or lay expiring, in
 “ groans of agony, under our feet.”

We leave the warrior, to repeat his shocking story, and enjoy his savage satisfaction. He speaks, 'tis true, in a strain somewhat superior to his character. As though the triumph of his heart, had exalted his sentiments, and ennobled his language. Nevertheless, for calmer scenes, and softer delights, we willingly leave him.

The eye is pleased with the elegant gaiety of the parterre; the ear is soothed with the warbling melody of the grove; but grand objects, and the magnificence of things, charm and transport the whole man. The mind, on such occasions, seems to expand with the prospect, and secretly exults in the consciousness of her greatness.—Intent upon these large and excursive views, our friends scarce advert to the minuter beauties, which address them on every side. The swan, with her snowy plumes, and loftily bending head; amidst all her superb air, and lordly state; rows unnoticed by.—Equally unnoticed is both the array and the action of the duck; her glossy neck, and finely chequered wings; her diving into the deep, or her darning up into day.—The swallow, skimming the air in wanton circles, or dipping her downy breast in the flood, courts their observation in vain.—Nor could the finny shoals attract their regard, though they played before the boat in sportive chace; or,

* For this very striking, and most terrific image, we are obliged to the prophet Jeremiah. Who, in a few words, but with all the pomp of horror, describes the din of approaching war, and the consternation of a vanquished people. At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his strong horses, at the rushing of his chariots, and at the rumbling of his wheels, the fathers shall not look back unto their children, for feebleness of hands. Jerem. xlvii. 3.

glancing quick to the surface, shewed their pearly coats, bedropped with gold.—Thus they, engaged in sublime speculations, neglect inferior entertainments. And if the sons of religion over-look the diminutive, transient, delusory forms of pleasure, which float on the narrow stream of time, or flit along the scanty bounds of sense ; it is only to contemplate and enjoy a happiness in their GOD, which is elevated, substantial, and immortal. Compared with which, whatever the eye can survey, from pole to pole, from the rising to the setting sun, is a cockle-shell, a butterfly, a bubble.

From this open and enlarged scene, they enter the skirts of a vast, umbrageous, venerable forest.—On either side, the sturdy and gigantic sons of earth, rear their aged trunks, and spread their branching arms. Trees, of every hardy make, and every majestic form, in agreeable disorder, and with a wild kind of grandeur, fill the ærial regions. The huge, expansive, roaming boughs unite themselves over the current, and diffuse “ their umbrage, broad and brown as “ evening.”

What solemn twilight ! what stupendous shades
Enwraapt these lone lone floods ? Thro' every nerve
A faccid horror thrills, a pleasing fear
Glides o'er the mind.

The timorous deer start at the clashing of the waves. Alarmed with the unusual sound, they look up, and gaze for a moment : then fly into covert, by various ways, and with precipitate speed, vanishing rather than departing from the glade.

How awful to reflect, as they steal along the shelving shores, and the moss-grown banks ; as they glide under the pendent shades of quivering poplar, of whistling fir, and the solemn-sounding foliage of the oak—how awful to reflect ; “ These were the lonely haunts of the Druids, two “ thousand years ago ! Amidst these dusky mazes, and “ sympathetic glooms, the pensive sages strayed Here, “ they sought, they found, and with all the solemnity of an-

“ perstitious devotion, they gathered their *mistletoe* *. Here,
 “ the visionary recluses shunned the tumultuous ways of
 “ men, and traced the mysterious paths of providence.
 “ Here they explored the secrets of nature, and invoked
 “ their fabled Gods.”

Sometimes wrapt in a sudden reverie of thought, sometimes engaged in conversation on the solemn appearance of things, the voyagers scarce perceive their progress. Before they are aware, this venerable scene is lost ; and they find themselves advanced upon the borders of a beautiful lawn. The forest, retiring to the right-hand, in the shape of a crescent, composed what Milton styles, “ A verduous wall of stateliest aspect ; ” and left, in the midst, an ample space for the flourishing of herbage.

Here, said Theron, if you please, we will alight ; and leave the bearer of our floating sedan, to pursue his ceaseless course—to enrich the bosom of other vallies, and leave the feet of other hills—to visit cities, and make the tour of counties—to reflect the image of many a splendid structure, which adorn his banks ; and, what is far more amiable, to distribute, all along his winding journey, innumerable conveniencies for man and beast : acquiring, the farther he goes, and the more benefits he confers, a greater depth, and a wider swell ; to the remarkable confirmation of that beneficent maxim, there is that scattereth, yet increaseth † ;

— — — — — And good, the more

Communicated, more abundant proves.

MILTON.

Theron and Aspasio walking across the spacious amphitheatre, seated themselves at the extremity of the bend.

* If the reader please, he may see these pompous solemnities described, in VANIERII Præd. Russ. pag. 125, &c. Where, the curious narrative of Pliny is embellished with the harmonious numbers of Virgil—with regard to the reflections, occasioned by this account ; the compliments lavished on the French, their religion, and their monarch ; I believe, the judicious protestant will confess with me ; that, as our charming author has copied the language, and entered into the spirit of the antients, he has also caught a tincture of their superstition. Imbibing, together with all their elegancies and graces, some of their monstrous and legendary Levities.

Verum ubi plura nitent in Carmine, non Ego paucis Offendar Maculis,

MOR.

† Prov. xi. 24.

Before them, lay a verdant area, quite even ; perfectly handsome ; but far from gay. Green was all the dress, without any mixture of gaudy flowers, or glittering colours. Only, now and then, a gentle breeze, skinning over the undulating mead, impressed a varying waving gloss on its surface. The whole seemed to resemble the decent and sober ornaments of maturer age, when it has put off the trappings, and bid adieu to the levities of youth. The broad transparent stream, ran parallel with the lips of the channel ; and drew, as it were, a line of circumvallation, to guard the calm retreat. The water appeared, where shaded with boughs, like a barrier of polished steel, where open to the sun, like a mirror of flowing crystal.—The eastern edges of the river, were barricaded with a kind of mountainous declivity. On whose rude and rocky sides, a few stunted shrubs and ill-formed trees hung. Among which the timorous rabbit burrowed, and the bearded goat browsed.—Not far from the summit, two or three fountains gushed ; which, uniting their currents, as they trickled down the steep, formed a natural cascade. Here, it was lost in the rushy dells, or obscured by the twisting roots ; there, it burst again into view, and playing full in the eye of day, looked like a sheet of spouting silver.

In this romantic retirement, said Theron, we are quite sequestered from society. We seem to be in a world of our own ; and should almost be tempted to forget, that we are encompassed with a kindred species ; did not the music of those silver-tongued bells, poured from a distant steeple, and gliding along the gentle stream, bring us news of human kind.

Escaped from man, and his busy walks, methinks, we are come to the house of tranquility. Such a deep, undisturbed composure reigns all around !—It is as if some august personage was making his entrance, or some majestic being was upon the point to speak, and all nature stood fixed in attentive expectation. No place better fitted to cherish, or to inspire, a contemplative sedateness.

Awful solitude ! how pleasingly horrid is the aspect of things !—*Before us*, are shaggy rocks, and frowning precipices, with broken walls of water, glittering through the cliffs. Unwrought, hoary grottoes, antient as the deluge ! Yawning, gloomy caverns, where fancy shudders, as she enters !—*Around us*, are “ the trees of the LORD.” Trees, which the hand of the most HIGH hath planted, and which seem to be co-eval with the world. Who can forbear admiring, their simplicity and grandeur ; the noble plainness of their verdure, and the prodigious stateliness of their growth ; their stupendous bulk, and venerable shades.

What a shock are our gardens, and what a mere dwarf are our groves, compared with these unconfined, vast plantations ?—Here is none of your nice exactness, but all is irregularly and wilfully great. Here are no traces of the shears, nor any footsteps of the spade, but the hand-work of the DEITY is apparent in all.—Give me the scenes, which disdain the puny assistance of art, and are infinitely superior to the low toils of man. Give me the scenes, which scorn to bribe our attention, with a little borrowed spruceness of shape ; but, by their own native utility, command our regard. I love the prospects, which, the moment they are beheld, strike the soul with veneration, or transport it with wonder, which cry aloud, in the ear of reason, *ascribe ye greatness to our GOD* *.—Such, I think, in a very eminent degree, is the forest ;

— — — High and lofty are the hills,
Or to the vast horizon wide extended,
A boundless deepment of the vale.

Ans. Solomon’s refined genius seems to have been fond of the same situation, and delighted with the same objects. Therefore, at a great expence, and in the most curious taste, he built *the house of the forest*.—Isaiah’s divine imagination was charmed with the same grand spectacle. More frequently, than any of the prophets, he derives his illustrations

* Deut. x. 17, 18.

from it. One comparison I particularly remember. Speaking of the Assyrian king, and his military forces, he likens them to such an assemblage of trees : numerous, as their amazing multitudes ; strong, as their massy trunks. Yet, numerous and potent as they were, they should all be brought low, and laid in the dust. “ For behold the
 “ LORD, the LORD of hosts shall lop the bough with
 “ terror, and the high one of stature shall be hewn down,
 “ and the haughty shall be humbled ; and he shall cut down
 “ the thickest of his forest with iron, and all shall
 “ fall by a mighty one *.”

Then he passes, by a most beautiful transition, to his darling topic, the redemption of sinners, he gives us, together with one of the finest † contrasts imaginable, a view of the MESSIAH and his great salvation. When all those lofty cedars are leveled with the ground, there shall come a rod, a single, slender twig shall spring from the stem of Jesse ‡. Which, notwithstanding its mean origin, and unpromising appearance, shall rear its head to the skies, and extend its shade to the ends of the earth.

Ther. You do well, Aspasio, to recall my roving thoughts. This magnificent solitude had captivated my imagination, and I was giving a loose to the usual sallies of my fancy. But, with a willing compliance, I turn to a more excellent subject.—Only I must assure you, that your remark awakens a painful idea in my mind, though a joyful one in your own. For, my hopes, which were once high and lifted up, are now too much like that devoted prostrate forest.

* Isa. x. 33-34. In the passage, concerning the destruction of Sennacherib's army, the prophet is remarkably exact and consistent. The high one of stature ; the nobles and principal officers. Weapons, and all their arms, and equipage, and the deportment, resemble the most stately trees. The haughty chiefs, proud of their victories, presuming on future conquests, and elevated in their own imagination, like cedars, towering to the skies. These shall be hewn down from their elevated dignity. They shall be humbled, deeply abased, and reduced to fuel and worms.

† This fine contrast, and that artificial transition, are by the judicious division of the two chapters, very much obscured, if not quite lost, to many readers. The chapters, I think, should by no means be separated, but, the tenth and the eleventh, as a continuation of the same prophecy, should be united.

‡ Isa. xi. 1.

Asp. My dear Theron, give me leave to say, they were never rightly founded, never built on the foundation of the gospel, which, instead of directing us what to do, in order to obtain acceptance with GOD, sets before us all that is requisite for this great end, as already done and completed by JESUS CHRIST. Your hopes were a mere system of self-dependence ; and what you thought

— A real good,
Nought else but vapidity misunderstood.

They were, what Shakespear calls, the baseless fabric of a vision. Now the shadowy and transient are vanished, that solid hopes and everlasting joys may succeed. Let them rest on CHRIST, the infinitely glorious REDEEMER, and they never shall be overthrown, never be demolished any more.

Cast a look upon yonder ivy. What can be more feeble ? It has not strength enough to withstand the slighted blast. Nay, if left to itself, its own weight would crush it to the earth. Yet, by twining around the oak, how high it rises, and how firm it stands ! An emblem of our state, and a pattern for our imitation.—So let us, who in ourselves are nothing, of ourselves can do nothing, let us fly to CHRIST ; rely on CHRIST ; and as Barnabas, (that true son of consolation) speaks, “ cleave to the LORD JESUS CHRIST with full purpose of heart *.” Let us determine to know nothing, to depend on nothing, but JESUS CHRIST, and him crucified. Let this be the motto for our faith, this the language of our souls ; CHRIST is all. Then shall our virtues, though hitherto smitten with a blast, revive as the corn. Then shall our hopes, though in themselves weaker than the ivy, mount like the cedars.

Ther. You can hardly imagine, how a sense of guilt and unworthiness oppresses my mind. I am often discouraged, and cannot bring myself to be stedfast in faith, or joyful through hope.

Ans. You cannot bring yourself, but GOD Almighty's power, by the grace of the gospel, can bring to pass these desirable effects. And hear what the prophet says farther, upon the charming topic which introduced our discourse.—Whenever the eloquent *Isaiah* undertakes to display a truth, he gives it all the energy, all the beauty, and every heightening touch, which it is capable of receiving.—This humble shoot, springing from the stem of *Jesse*, shall rise to such a pitch of elevation; that it shall be conspicuous far and near, and *stand for an ensign of the people*. It shall be seen, not like a beacon on the top of a hill, by the *Israelites* only, or the natives of a single territory; but like the great luminaries of heaven, shall be visible in every country, and by the whole inhabited world.—*To it shall the Gentiles seek*; not only from the remotest, but from the most barbarous and idolatrous climes. These, even these persons, though savage in their nature, and detestable in their manners, shall be freely admitted: shall find rest and refreshment under his shadow. Nay, the refreshment which he yields, and the comfort which they receive, shall be not seasonable only, but of sovereign efficacy; *his rest shall be glorious* *; shall be attended with perfect security; shall be productive of every good; and issue in everlasting joy.

From this we learn, that all the blessings of CHRIST'S mediation are designed for *Gentiles*; for the most abandoned and most abominable sinners.—That they are so full and consummate, as to create a calm of tranquility, *a glorious rest*, even in the most troubled, afflicted, guilty consciences. And I dare challenge my Theron's misgiving mind, to specify any want which is not supplied, any grievance which is not redressed, by the righteousness of JESUS CHRIST. I formerly encountered your *objections*, let me now combat your *scruples*.

Ther. Sometimes, I have a deep and distressing conviction of my extreme sinfulness.—'Tis like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear—'Tis like the vilest filth, and rep-

* *Isai. xli. 26.*

ders me odious to myself; how much more lothesome to the all-seeing eye?—It appears like a debt of ten thousand talents, and I have nothing, no, not any thing to pay.—Then I experience, what the *Psalmist* so pathetically laments: *my sins have taken such hold upon me, that I am not able to look up: yea, they are more in number than the hairs of my head*, and my heart is ready to fail; my hopes are upon the point to expire.

Asp. Then, Theron, fly to that just and righteous ONE, who is the strength of our hearts; the life of our hopes; and our portion for ever.

If sin is a sore burden; look unto CHRIST, who bore it all, in his own body on the tree; and removed, entirely removed that tremendous load, which would otherwise have sunk the whole world into the nethermost hell.—If sin renders us filthy; let us have recourse to that blood of sprinkling, which cleanses, not from a few stains only, but from all guilt. By which the most defiled transgressors, become fair as the fairest wool; nay, whiter than the virgin snows*.—If sin is a debt†; subjecting us to wrath, and binding us over to punishment, let us confide in that gracious SURETY, who has taken the debt upon himself, and made it all his own. And not only so but has paid it; paid it to the uttermost farthing, to the very last mite.—So that justice itself can demand no more.

Let me confirm and illustrate this comfortable truth, by a scriptural similitude. No similitudes are more exact, and none so striking. I have (of you, by your penitential exercises; but I, by my free grace have) *blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins*‡. A little while ago, the whole expanse of yonder sky was co-

* Psal. li. 7.

† By these three images, the Psalmist displays the horrible nature, and destructive malignity of sin; together with the free grant and invaluable value of the forgiveness, which is in CHRIST JESUS. Blessed is he whose transgression, as an insupportable load, is borne or taken away; whose sin, as being the most abominable filth, is covered; unto whom the LORD imputeth not that most ruinous of all debts, iniquity.

‡ Isa. xlv. 22.

covered with clouds. Nothing could more strongly represent a multitude of corruptions besieging the heart, and a multitude of iniquities overspreading the life.—But where is, now, that immense arrangement of gloomy vapours? The sun has shone them, and the wind has swept them, clean away. There are none, neither great nor small, remaining. From one end of the wide extended hemisphere to the other, we see nothing but the clear and beautiful blue of the firmament. So, faith the SPIRIT OF GOD, to the sinner that believes, so totally is your guilt, however horrid and enormous, done away through the dying JESUS.

Ther. It is not possible to conceive, nor will the whole creation afford, a more exquisitely fine comparison. Nothing can so emphatically describe the most prodigious multitude, entirely obliterated, without the least trace of their former existence.—When a stain is taken from our garments, the defilement is removed, but the fine native gloss never returns. When a wound is healed in our flesh, the gash is closed up, but some blemish or scar always remains. Whereas, when a cloud is brushed away from the sky, not only the transient blot disappears, but the delicate expanse, the “living splendour,” is as glossy and brilliant as ever*.—But I am not only chargeable with past iniquities; I am also liable to daily misdeeds. I relapse into sin; and when I would do good, evil is present with me.—Nay; my best hours are not free from sinful infirmities, nor my best duties from similar imperfections. Which, like a worm at the core of the fruit, eat away the vigour, and tarnish the beauty of my services.

Asp. Because through the frailty of your mortal nature, you cannot always stand upright; because even the just man falleth daily, and daily contracteth defilement; therefore a fountain is opened for sin and for uncleanness†—The blood and atonement of CHRIST are compared to a

* There seems to be an exactness and a delicacy in the prophet's comparison, which neither Theron nor Alpano have observed. The gradation I mean, the beautiful and comfortable gradation, in the sense of those words, Nubes, Nubecula; as a thick cloud, yes, as a thin cloud.

† Zech. xiii. 1.

heavenly fountain. In which polluted sinners may wash daily, wash hourly; and be constantly, perfectly clean.—A cistern may fail; may be broken or exhausted. But it is the property of a real fountain, never to be dried up, always to yield its waters. Such is the efficacy of CHRIST's death! not to be diminished by universal and by incessant use. It removes the iniquity of the land *. It takes away the sin of the world †. It is new, for our application, every morning; new, for this blessed purpose, every moment.—On which account, it makes complete provision for our cleansing, our restoration and our comfort.—Abolishing our daily, hourly, momentary miscarriages, as thoroughly, as these sun-beams overcome and dissipate the shades of night.—Especially, as this blood is not only sovereign in its virtue, and always free for our approach, but is ever pleaded by a great HIGH-PRIEST in our behalf. Therefore, the inspired casuist directs us to this source of consolation, under all the upbraidings of conscience, and amidst all the remains of inbred depravity. “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the FATHER, JESUS CHRIST the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins ‡.

We; St. John reckons himself in the number of those frail offending creatures, who stand in need of CHRIST, as a perpetual intercessor. This is written, not to encourage us in the commission of sin, but that we may be less discouraged, under a sense of our infirmities.—We have; not we possibly may, but we actually have. A soul burdened with guilt, cannot be satisfied, cannot be eased, with a bare perhaps. It is therefore positively affirmed; as a matter of established certainty; of which we should not admit a doubt.—We have for our advocate, not a mean person, but HIM who received an illustrious testimony from the most excellent glory, this is my beloved SON §—Not a guilty person, who stands in need of pardon for him-

* Zech. iii. 9.

† John i. 29.

‡ 1 John, ii. 2.

§ 1 Pet. i. 21.

self, but JESUS CHRIST, the divinely, the supremely, the only righteous one.—Not a mere petitioner, who relies upon liberality or mercy; but who has merited, fully merited whatever he asks, in behalf of his clients. Being *the propitiation for our sins*; having paid our ransom, and purchased our peace.—In consequence of which, he claims rather than asks our renewed, our irrevocable forgiveness—His he claims, not from an unrelenting judge, but from his FATHER and our FATHER—And can such a plea meet with a repulse? Can such an advocate miscarry in his suit?—If the prophets of old were reckoned, *the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof**; because, like their ancestor Jacob they had power with GOD, and prevailed in prayer: O! what a defence, what a security, is the sublime, excellent, and ever prevailing intercession of JESUS CHRIST!

“Your services, you complain, are tarnished and defective.”—Then, my dear friend, renounce them in point of confidence; and gladly receive, cordially embrace, the all-perfect righteousness of your LORD.—*The law makes nothing perfect.* Your own conformity to its precepts, can never fit you for heaven, never give you peace of conscience. Hither if we look for any of these desirable blessings; we are like those travellers, who look for the fruits of Eden in the deserts of Arabia. But our LORD JESUS CHRIST, by one oblation, has perfected for ever, them that are sanctified.

By the oblation of himself, which was grand, inconceivably great, and of infinite efficacy; being ennobled by all the glories of the GODHEAD.—On which account, it needed no repetition; it was incapable of any augmentation.

W w

* 2 Kings ii. 12. xiii. 14. There is a peculiar beauty, and most apposite allusion, in this proverbial saying, as used by the ancient Israelites. Horses and chariots were esteemed in those ages, the principal strength of the battle—the most formidable apparatus of war. Of these the Israelites were entirely destitute. Their GOD alone, by his almighty power, enabled them to multiply hostes; and we never read of their bringing up a considerable number of valry into the field. But, so long as they enjoyed the presence of GOD, they wanted not this arm of flesh. They had more than an equivalent for chariots, horses, and chariots of iron, in the fervent, the effectual prayers of those holy men of GOD.

tion ; it is all-sufficient, though but one.—By this immensely efficacious sacrifice he *hath perfected*. What are we to understand by this expression ? The epistle to the *Colossians* informs us. He hath rendered them unblameable and un-reproveable in his sight. To be free from blame ; without any cause of just reproof ; chargeable with no failure ; is not this a state of perfection ?—And this, not merely before a human or angelic scrutiny, but *in his sight* ; before that most pure eye, which cannot behold iniquity.—This perfection, effected by our REDEEMER's satisfaction, is not barely for a day, or a season ; it knows no intermission, it continues *for ever*. Not like the green hue, which vernal suns have imparted to these herbs and plants ; but like the blue lustre, which the Almighty fiat gave to yonder expanse of the skies.

Ther. What meaneth the following expression ? *Me-thinks, that damps my hopes.* If I should not be in the number of the sanctified, this text speaks no comfort to me.

Ans. Those that are sanctified, says an eminent critic, signify those who are endued with the evangelical sanctification. Which consists in the holiness, the obedience, the death of CHRIST, imputed to them, and received by faith. Whereby, they are cleansed from all their filthiness, and constituted righteous in the presence of GOD.—It is pretty evident, that the Apostle cannot intend the righteousness of works, or inherent holiness ; because that is always imperfect. Of that, David cries out, in the language of despondency, *enter not into judgement with thy servant.* And assigns this reason for his request ; *in thy sight*, and in this respect, *no man living shall be justified*, or found perfect. No ; nothing can claim that character before HIM, who dwelleth in light inaccessible, but only the work, the sufferings, the righteousness of CHRIST. These therefore, and these only, can make the comers thereunto perfect.

As if we somewhere seen, painted upon a flat surface, an awkward and disagreeable countenance. Nothing was remarkable, graceful ; but every feature disproportioned. Yet, not very late, reflected from a cylindrical mirror, the lineaments were reformed

and well adjusted ; symmetry connected every part, and beauty smiled throughout the whole.—Like the *former* our virtues appear, when compared with the immaculate purity of GOD, or the sublime perfection of his law. But they acquire the amiableness of the *latter*, when presented to the FATHER by our divine MEDIATOR ; when recommended by his most precious oblation ; and accepted in the BELOVED*.

Milton, taking his hint from the revelation of St. John, represents our great HIGH-PRIEST, in this glorious and delightful attitude. Represents him, offering up the supplications and penitential duties of our first parents ; purifying them with the incense of his own merits ; and thus interceding before the throne.

See, FATHER ! what first fruits on earth are sprung
From thy implanted grace in man ! These sighs,
And prayers, which in this golden censer mix'd
With incense, I thy PRIEST before thee bring.

— Now therefore bend thine ear
To supplication ! hear his sighs though mute !
Unskilful with what words to pray, let ME
Interpret for him ; ME his advocate
And propitiation. All his works on ME,
Good, or not good, ingraft : MY merit those
Shall perfect ; and for these MY death shall pay †.

The Poet's words are very emphatical. Yet words can no more express the prevalence of our LORD's negotiation, than the picture of the sun can diffuse its splendor, or

* They, the persons and performances of frail men, shall come up with acceptance on ministration, both the LORD. Hag. ix. 7. Which is explained by St. Peter's comment. Ye men as holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable unto GOD by JESUS CHRIST. 1 Pet. ii. 5. And still farther ascertained by St. Paul's practice. Who, when he addresses his MAJESTY of heaven with any petition, or presents the tribute of praise, presents not to do either the one or the other, but on the appointed altar, or in the blessed SACRAMENT, the name. Because, secluded from this grand recommendation, they would be offensive to the awful JEHOVAH, "as smoke in his nostrils ;" accompanied with it, they are acceptable, "as the sweet smelling incense."

convey its warmth.—Though our poor performances are rendered acceptable by this prevailing intercessor : let us never forget, that his works, supremely righteous and incomparably excellent, are the cause of our salvation. By his works, I am justified : by his works, I am saved. They are my plea ; and can there be a more substantial one ? They are my boast ; and can there be a more rational one ?

Ther. When I look on myself, and my religious obligations, I find, that my spiritual wants are many. I have many duties to discharge, and many temptations to withstand. I have many corruptions to mortify, and many graces to cultivate. Yet have I no stock, and no strength of mine own.

Asp. I rejoice, that my Theron is sensible of his own indigence. The good LORD keep us both, in this respect as little children ; whose whole dependence is upon their nurse's care, or their parent's bounty ! Then may we, having such a sense of our poverty, and having a great HIGH PRIEST over the house of GOD, come boldly to the throne of grace. We may apply, through the righteousness of JESUS CHRIST, for all needful succour, and for every desirable blessing.—It Solomon could say ; LORD, remember David and his trouble. If Moses could say ; LORD, remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob thy servants. How much more confidently may we say ; “ LORD, remember “ JESUS, the son of thy love ! Remember JESUS, and “ all his sufferings ; JESUS and all his merits. Shall they “ be sent empty away, who have their SAVIOUR’s obedience and death to plead ?”—No verily. Though they are altogether unworthy in themselves, yet worthy is the LAMB that was slain, for whose sake their petitions should be granted, and their every necessity supplied.

Let me repeat to you a most beautiful and encouraging portion of scripture. Which you may look upon, under all your wants, as Charte Blanche put into your hand by God all sufficient. It gives you full liberty, to ask what you need ; and good ground, to expect what you ask. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of JESUS ; by a new and living way which he

has consecrated for us, through the the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an **HIGH-PRIEST** over the house of **GOD**; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith*.

The Apostle, in this place, and throughout this whole epistle, alludes to the Mosaic ordinances: in order to shew, that the privileges of the christian dispensation, were typified by, yet are greatly superior to, those of the Jewish.—Among the Jews, none but the High-Priest was permitted to set a foot within the holy of holies; and he, only on the solemn day of expiation. Whereas, all christians are allowed to enter into the immediate presence of the most high **GOD**; may have the nearest access to **HIM**, who dwells in the heaven of heavens; and this, not once in the year only, but at all times, and on all occasions.—The High Priest never made that awful approach, but with the blood of a slaughtered animal. We have blood of infinitely richer value, to atone for our failings, and recommend our addresses; even the blood of the crucified **JESUS**.—Aaton entered through the veil of the temple; a way, which was soon to become antiquated, and for ever to be abolished. We enter by a far more noble way; by the flesh of our blessed **REDEEMER**; given as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins. Which way is both new and living; such as never waxes old, will subsist to the end of time, and leads to eternal life.—Trusting in this sacrifice, and entering by this way, which are consecrated on purpose for that use, we may not only draw near, but draw near with boldness, with an humble filial confidence; and present our supplications with assurance of faith—with full assurance of faith.

How strong is the contrast, and how fine the gradation here, precious the doctrine, and how free the privilege! What shall we fear, if we believe this doctrine? What can we lack, if we improve this privilege?—And why should we not believe the former, why should we not improve the latter, since they both are founded on the same excellent

endowments, not on any recommending actions of our own, but purely, solely, entirely on the blood of JESUS CHRIST.

Ther. There may come seasons of desertion, when all graces are languid if not dead: when the light of GOD's countenance is suspended, if not turned into darkness: and the man is more like a lifeless log, than a zealous christian. These frames of mind I have heard mentioned, and I begin to know something of them by experience.

Asp. Then Theron, when you walk in darkness, and see no light of sensible comfort, trust in the name, the unchangeable grace, of the LORD; and stay upon the righteousness, the consummate righteousness, of your GOD *. This, you see, is not barely my advice, but the direction of an infallible guide — This agrees also with the character of a real christian, as it is most exactly drawn by an unerring pen. We rejoice in CHRIST JESUS, and have no confidence in the flesh †; no reliance on any thing of our own, either for present joy, or future glory. What CHRIST has done, is that which quiets our consciences, and cheers our hearts. It is the glorious robe of HIS righteousness, which covers our sins, and adorns our persons; which renders us completely and eternally righteous before GOD himself: and gives us a sure, an unalienable title to the blessedness of heaven.

To rely on the elevation of our spirits, or the enlargement of our devotion is like building our house upon the ice. Which may abide for a season; but, upon the first alteration of weather, ceases to be a foundation, and becomes water that runneth apace. Whereas, to derive our consolation from the MEDIATOR's righteousness, and JEHOVAH's faithfulness, is to build our edifice upon the rock: which may not be removed, but standeth fast for

* Isa. l. 10.

† Phil. ii. 13. For God himself, there is no where else finer, I may say, than in the heart of the christian. "This is my Father, I own, but I have no confidence in him, nor in any thing beside." The christian, who is not a hypocrite, is a man whose heart is moved with the love

ever. The former of these, even amidst all our changes, is invariably the same. The latter, notwithstanding all our unworthiness, is inviolably sure. Therefore, the fruit of that righteousness is peace, and the effect of this faithfulness is, if not rapturous joy, yet quietness and assurance for ever *.

So that when it is winter in my soul, and there lies a dearth on all my sensible delights, I would still say with the psalmist; "why art thou so disquieted, O my soul? — **CHRIST** is the same amidst all thy derelictions. He is "a green fir-tree †, which never loses its verdure. Under "his shadow thou may'st always find repose.

"We have peace with **GOD**, not because we feel this "or that holy emotion in our breasts: not because we are "conscious of any difference, between ourselves and the "most flagitious of mankind. But because **JESUS** is the "CHRIST, and has fulfilled all righteousness in our stead. "We may not always be fervent in spirit. We may not "always be free from vile affections. But his merit and "atonement are always mighty to save. They constitute "an everlasting and infinite basis for our justification. The "promises of **GOD**, through his mediation, are yea, and "amen ‡: are unquestionably and irrevocably ours;" are, "amidst all circumstances, and under the deepest deserti- "on, ours."

Ther. 'Tis very probable, I may meet with afflictions; death in my family, or disease in my person. Disappointments may frustrate my designs. Providence may wear a frowning aspect; as though the **LORD** had a controversy with his sinful creature, and was causing him to possess the

* **Isa.** xxxiii, 17.

† **Hos.** xiv, 8.

‡ **1 Cor.** i. **Yes** and **Amen**—**yea**; that is, our own. When a poor man presents a petition, and his rich friend answers, **yea**; the favour is granted, the gift becomes his own. **Amen**; sure to be performed. The word signifies truth or faithfulness. Implying, that the promises are as certain as truth can make them; as much to be depended on, as faithfulness itself. --- **Almighty CHRIST JESUS**. Not by virtue of any good works, or condition of any worthiness in us, but wholly on account of **CHRIST JESUS**—of his precious blood, and of his righteousness.

iniquities of his youth. And what will be sufficient to support and to cheer, in such a gloomy hour * ?

Ans. The righteousness of CHRIST.—An Ambassador from the Spanish court was once extolling at a prodigious rate, the magnificence and glory of his sovereign. He set about proving his superiority to all other monarchs, by running over a long catalogue of countries, provinces, and states subject to his dominion. An envoy from the French King being present, replied to each of these petty titles, France! France! never varying his answer, but still repeating the word France. Thereby representing this one monarchy, as more than equivalent to all those inconsiderable principalities.—With unspeakably greater propriety may I constantly reiterate, the righteousness! the righteousness! the incomprehensibly glorious righteousness of JESUS CHRIST! as a most satisfactory answer to all complaints; as a most solid support under all troubles; and as more than equal to all our wants.

Nothing is so sovereign, to calm our fears, and remove all apprehensions of the divine wrath; apprehensions of the divine wrath, would draw the curtains of horror around our sick beds, and throw upon our languishing eye-lids the shadow of death †. But a believing improvement of the imputed righteousness clears up the mournful scene, and takes away the sting of tribulation.

Attending to this great propitiation, the sufferer see his sins forgiven, and his GOD reconciled. From whence he concludes, that the severest afflictions are only fatherly corrections; shall not exceed his ability to bear; and shall assuredly obtain a gracious issue. He can fetch comfort from that cheering word, I will be with him in trouble; and expect the accomplishment of that most consolatory

* The sufficiency of CHRIST's righteousness, to answer all these important and delightful ends, is excellently displayed in Mr. KAWLIN's sermons, entitled CHRIST the righteousness of his people. In which the public have seen the grand and amiable essentials of the gospel, delivered in masculine language; defended by nervous reasoning; and animated with a lively devotion.

† Alluding to that description of tribulation, and anguish, which, I believe, no person of sensibility can read without shuddering; my heart was often weeping, and on my eye-lids was the shadow of death, Job. xvi.

promise, I will deliver him, and bring him to honor*.—These supports have enabled the saints, to kiss the rod, and bless the hand, which chastised them. To possess their souls, not in patience only, but in thankfulness also. While they have *looked inward*, and discerned their absolute need of these bitter but salutary medicines: have *looked upward*, and beheld the cup in a most wise and tender PHYSICIAN's hand: have *looked forward*, with joyful hope, to that better world; where GOD will remove all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more sorrow, nor any more pain.

Ther. The last occasion of seeing the bright hour of death, and the tremendous day of judgment. Will this righteousness carry us, with safety, through the fiery valley; and present us, with acceptance, at the dreadful tribunal?

Asp. It will:—it will.—This silence, all the curses of the law, and disarms death of every terror. To believe in this righteousness, is to meet death at our SAVIOUR's side: or, rather, like good old Simeon, with the SAVIOUR in our arms.—They overcame, says the beloved disciple; they overcame the last enemy, not by natural fortitude, or philosophic resolution, but by the blood of the LAMB†. By that grand price of redemption, which cost the REDEEMER every drop of his blood: which delivers sinners from the wrath to come, and entitles them to the incorruptible inheritance.

I know, adds the heroic Apostle, whom I have believed‡; I am assured, that my JESUS is infinitely faithful, and will not desert me: that his ransom is absolutely sufficient, and cannot deceive me. Therefore, with a holy bravery, he bids defiance to death; or rather, triumphs over it, as a vanquished enemy; thanks be to GOD who giveth us the victory through our LORD JESUS CHRIST§!—

X

* Psa. xxi. 15.

† Rev. xii. 11.

‡ 1 Tim. i. 12.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 57.

Nay, through the victorious efficacy of CHRIST's propitiation, death is ours * ; not our foe, but our friend and deliverer. We may number it among our treasures ; and rest satisfied, that to die, is gain.

What? Though our flesh see corruption. Though this body, vile at present, be made viler still, by dwelling amidst worms, and mouldering in the dust ; yet through HIS righteousness, who is the resurrection and the life, it shall shake off the dishonors of the grave : it shall rise to a new and illustrious state of existence : it shall be made like the glorious and immortal body of our triumphant LORD.—If the body be so refined, so exalted ; what will be the dignity, what the perfection, of the soul ! or rather, of soul and body both, when they are happily and indissolubly united, at the resurrection of the just ?—Shall they have any thing to fear, when the judgment is set, and the books are opened ? 'Tis probable there will be no accusation, 'tis certain there is no condemnation, to them that are in CHRIST JESUS†. Who shall lay any thing to their charge ? It is GOD—not man, or angel, or any creature, but GOD—that justifies them. The GOD whose law was broke, the GOD to whom vengeance belongeth, he himself pronounces them innocent, because their iniquities have been laid upon CHRIST ; he himself pronounces them righteous, because they are interested in the obedience of their REDEEMER ; on these accounts, he himself pronounces them blessed, and gives them an abundant entrance into the joy of their LORD.

But what can express, or who can imagine their happiness, when they take up their abode, in the palaces of heaven ; amidst the choir of angels ; and under the light of GOD's countenance ! when they possess the hope of righteousness ‡ ; when they wear the crown of righteousness § ; and receive that great, that eternal salvation, which is an adequate recompence for the humiliation and agonies of JESUS CHRIST the righteous ¶.

Come then, my dear Theron, let us henceforth be as branches, ingrafted into the heavenly VINE; derive all our sap, all our moisture, all our consolation, from his fulness.—Let us live upon our all sufficient REDEEMER, as the Israelites subsisted on their manna from heaven, and their waters from the rock; and not wish for other, as we cannot possibly enjoy better sustenance.

Ther. Is this the meaning of our LORD's exhortation, when he shews the necessity of eating his flesh, and drinking his blood?

Ans. 'Tis the very same. A repeated and important application of our SAVIOUR's merits for all the purposes of piety and salvation, is the kernel of this nut, the meaning of this metaphor.—When we habitually advert to JESUS CHRIST, as dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification; performing all righteousness, that we may be intitled to an eternal crown; and interceding in heaven, that we may be filled with all the fulness of GOD: then we eat his flesh, and drink his blood.—When we habitually advert to JESUS CHRIST, as entirely abolishing all our guilt; making us whiter than snow, by his most precious blood; and, through his transcendently noble obedience, presenting us blameable before GOD. Then we derive a life of solid comfort, and real godliness, from his mediatorial offices, just as we derive the continuance of our natural life, from the daily use of alimentary recruits.

Ther. Your discourse brings to my remembrance that magnificent and beautiful passage in scripture, where CHRIST is called THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. Your doctrine sets the comparison in a very advantageous light; gives it the utmost force, and the greatest propriety.—The righteousness of CHRIST, according to your account, is as extensively useful in the christian life, as the beams of that grand luminary are in the material world.—The sun fills the air; where it sheds the light, and pours the day.—The sun penetrates the ocean; from whence it exhales vapours, and forms the clouds.—In the vegetable creation, the sun raises the sap, and protrudes the gems; unfolds the leaves, and paints the blossom; distends the fruit, and concocts the juices.—Turn we to the animal world; the sun lends sight

to every eye, and awakens myriads of insects into being.— It diffuses those reviving rays, in which all nature basks and dispenses that general smile, in which every sensible creature exults. Indeed, its benign agency is universal. There is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

Asp. Thus the **LORD JESUS CHRIST**, that true and only sun of righteousness, arises on his people with healing in his wings*. So various, so efficacious, and so extensive are his influences—Like a sun, he enlightens and enlivens: like winter, he chastens and protects: like a remedy, he heals and restores—And all, by virtue of his righteousness, on account of his righteousness—Nor can we doubt, nor need we wonder, if we consider its nature and its author. Its nature, it is supremely excellent, has every kind, and every degree of perfection. Its author; it is the righteousness and obedience of that sublime **PERSON**, in whom dwells all the fulness of the **GODHEAD**.

It must therefore—you will permit me to sum up in a word, what has been displayed at large—it must be fully answerable to the demands of the law, even in its highest purity, and utmost exactness—It is infinitely superior to the demerit of sin, and entirely absolves from all guilt, entirely exempts from all condemnation—It is a most valid and never-failing plea, against the accusations of satan, and the challenges of conscience—It is the unquestioned title to every blessing, whether in this or in eternity, whether of grace or of glory.—It is the support for the christian, in an hour of desertion, and in the agonies of death. Casting anchor on this bottom, he may dismiss every fear, and ride out every storm. Leaning upon this staff, he may go down to the repose of the grave; and neither be appalled at the solemn hatbingers of discolution, nor terrified at its far more awful consequences.—The merit of this righteousness, and the power of its **DIVINE AUTHOR**, will unseal the tomb; will bring forth the sleeping dust from the chambers of putrefaction; and build up the whole man into immortality and glory. By this he will

be presented without spot * ; presented faultless † ; yea, be presented perfect ‡, and with exceeding joy, before the throne.

What a gift then is the righteousness of CHRIST!—"O my soul, what wouldst thou wish, for thy consolation and joy? What wouldst thou wish, to be the stability of thy hope, and the strength of thy salvation?—Wouldst thou have that, which is greater than the whole world, and all its grandeur, and all its treasure? Thou hast it in CHRIST. Wouldst thou have that, which is greater than the heaven of heavens, and all its starry host, and all its angelic inhabitants? Thou hast it in CHRIST.—Wouldst thou have that, which is abundantly greater, incomparably greater, immensely greater than all? Thou hast it in CHRIST.—Wouldst thou have that, which is great as the inexorable justice of GOD can demand; great as the unsearchable wisdom of GOD can devise? Thou hast it in CHRIST.—Wouldst thou have that, which is great, and excellent, and glorious, as the perfections of the almighty and eternal GOD? Thou hast it in the holiness, the righteousness, and the blood of CHRIST—in the immaculate holiness of his nature—in the consummate righteousness of his life—and the infinitely precious blood of his cross.—Surely, then, thou hast to say, with the holy Apostle; blessed be GOD for this UNSPEAKABLE GIFT."

* Eph. v. 27.

† Jude 24.

‡ Col. i. 28.

